217 IDEAS FOR PLANTING & GROWING

AMERICAN FARMER'S ALMANAC™

EDIBLE GARDENING™

A to Z Growing Guide

Veggies, Herbs & Fruits

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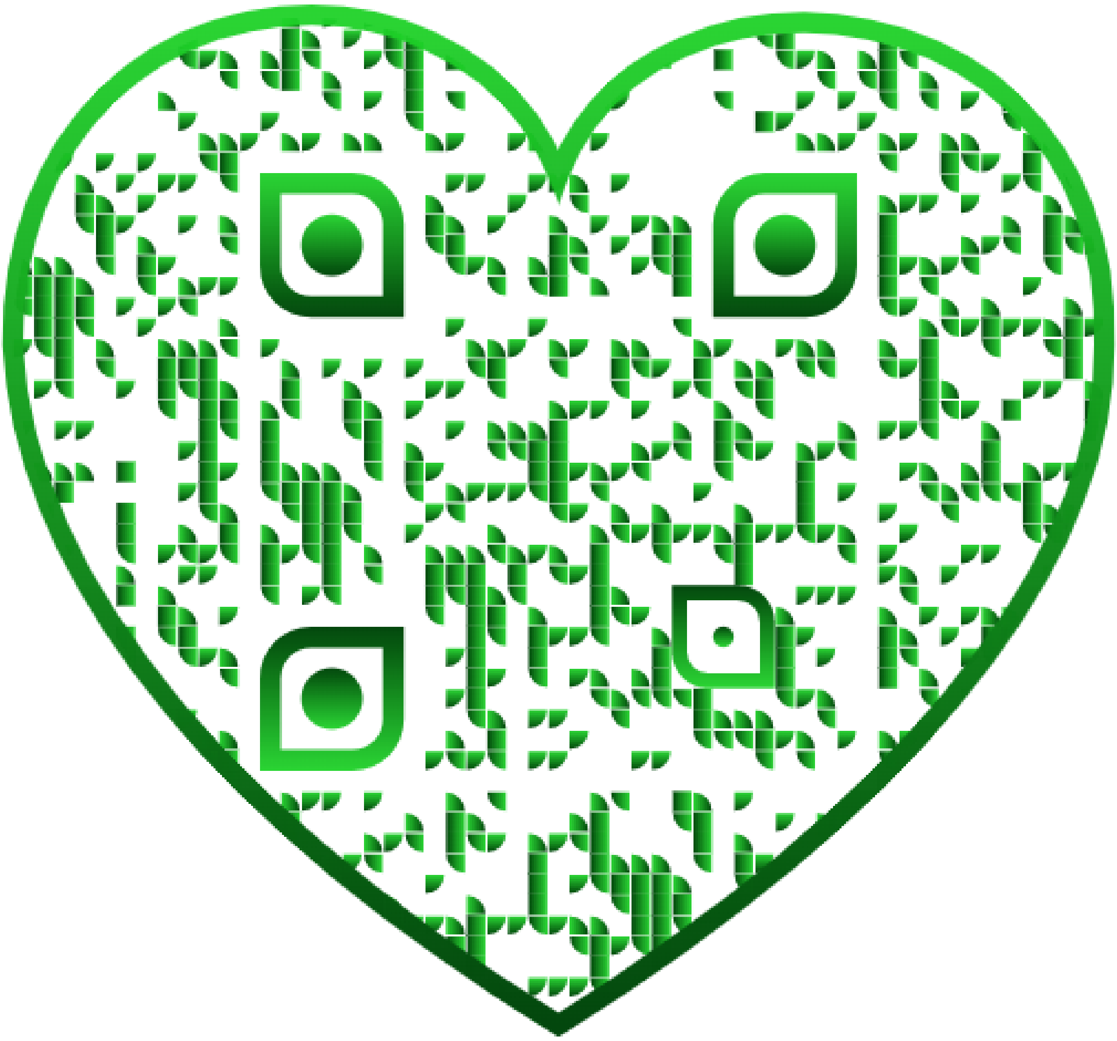

AMERICAN FARMER'S ALMANAC®

EDIBLE GARDENING™

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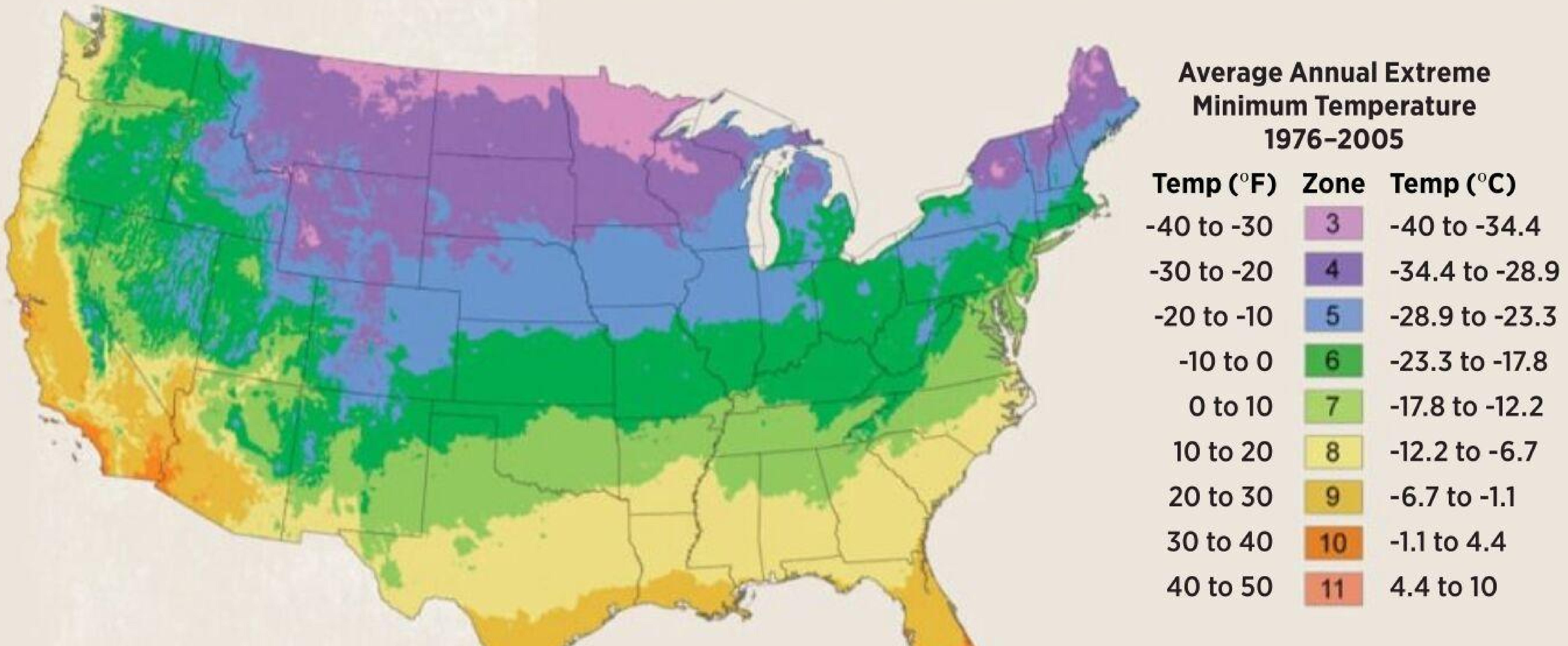
USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

A reference chart for where you live.



Average Annual Extreme Minimum Temperature 1976–2005

Temp (°F)	Zone	Temp (°C)
-40 to -30	3	-40 to -34.4
-30 to -20	4	-34.4 to -28.9
-20 to -10	5	-28.9 to -23.3
-10 to 0	6	-23.3 to -17.8
0 to 10	7	-17.8 to -12.2
10 to 20	8	-12.2 to -6.7
20 to 30	9	-6.7 to -1.1
30 to 40	10	-1.1 to 4.4
40 to 50	11	4.4 to 10

GREEN THUMBERY

Here's how to create a healthy, fertile garden that'll grow plenty of delicious produce for years to come.

Starting a garden is a great family project. There may be a little sweat equity up front, but the dividends can last a lifetime.

GREEN THUMBERY

Start Your First Garden

Even rookie gardeners can harvest a fine first-time crop by starting small and gathering experience. BY LISA KAPLAN GORDON

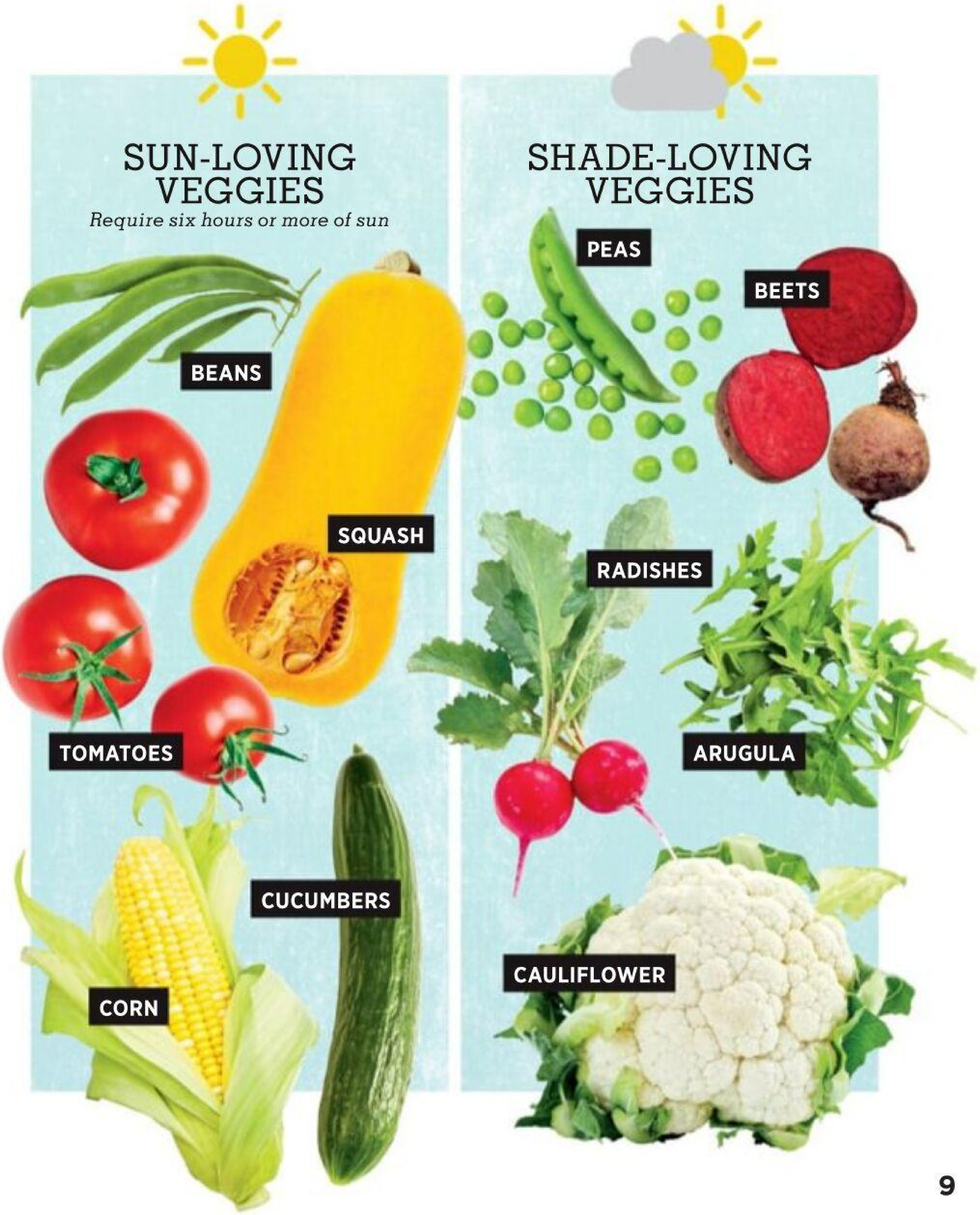
IF YOU'VE NEVER had a garden full of edibles, you might think you need a green thumb or divine intervention to grow your own vegetables, fruits and herbs.

But gardening doesn't require a miracle. In fact, you can dig right in and be successful, even if you've never grown edibles before. With a little reading and planning and some decent soil, you can grow enough vegetables to feed your family tasty, wholesome food nearly year-round. Here's how.

PICK A LOCATION

Sure, it's great if you have a spare and sun-drenched half acre to grow your crop. But most of us aren't that lucky.

Fear not: You can grow some produce in anything that can hold 3 or 4 inches of soil in a place that gets only a few hours of sun a day. The trick is planting the right vegetables in the right place. ›


SUN-LOVING VEGGIES
Require six hours or more of sun
BEANS
SQUASH
TOMATOES
CUCUMBERS
CORN
SHADE-LOVING VEGGIES
PEAS
BEETS
RADISHES
ARUGULA
CAULIFLOWER

GROW YOUR SOIL FIRST

The minerals in soil are plant food, and the consistency of soil makes it easier (or harder) for plants to slurp up that food. That's why it's important to grow your garden in nutrient-rich, crumbly, well-draining soil.

Once you've selected a spot for your garden, send a soil sample to your local cooperative extension. For about $20, they'll analyze your soil and report what nutrients it contains and what you might need to add.

Generally, a hefty dose of home-grown or commercial compost will provide all the nutrients your plants require–mainly nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium and sulfur.

If your soil is compacted clay, which makes it hard for plants to eat and drink, add peat moss and coarse (not beach) sand. If your soil is sandy and drains quickly, try adding aged manure, peat moss or sawdust. (For more info on soil, see pages 12–13.)

START SMALL

Many beginning gardeners, full of energy and ambition, start their growing hobby with gardens bigger than they ultimately can handle. Remember that every square foot you devote to a garden needs tilling, planting, watering and weeding throughout the growing season.

So start small. Hey, you can grow your first salad garden in an old, rusted wheelbarrow filled with soil–a manageable task. Or, you can work a 10- x 10-foot garden for your first effort, expanding a little each year as you become more skilled at growing crops.

INVEST THE TIME

You can spend as much time as you have tending your garden. There are always more weeds to pull, tomatoes to stake and spent blossoms to deadhead.

But if you're thinking of a simple, modest garden to start, plan on spending a weekend deciding what to plant and getting your soil prepared, another weekend building raised beds (if they're part of your plan) and another day or so sowing seeds and planting starts. After your garden is growing, plan to spend about two to three hours a week watering, weeding and flicking bugs from plants. The good news is that gardening takes energy. So for every hour you work, you're burning 200 to 400 calories!

DIG THIS TIP

To keep dirt from sticking to your tools, spray the blades with silicone lubricant. You'll dig deeper, faster and with less effort!

BEGIN WITH EASY VEGETABLES

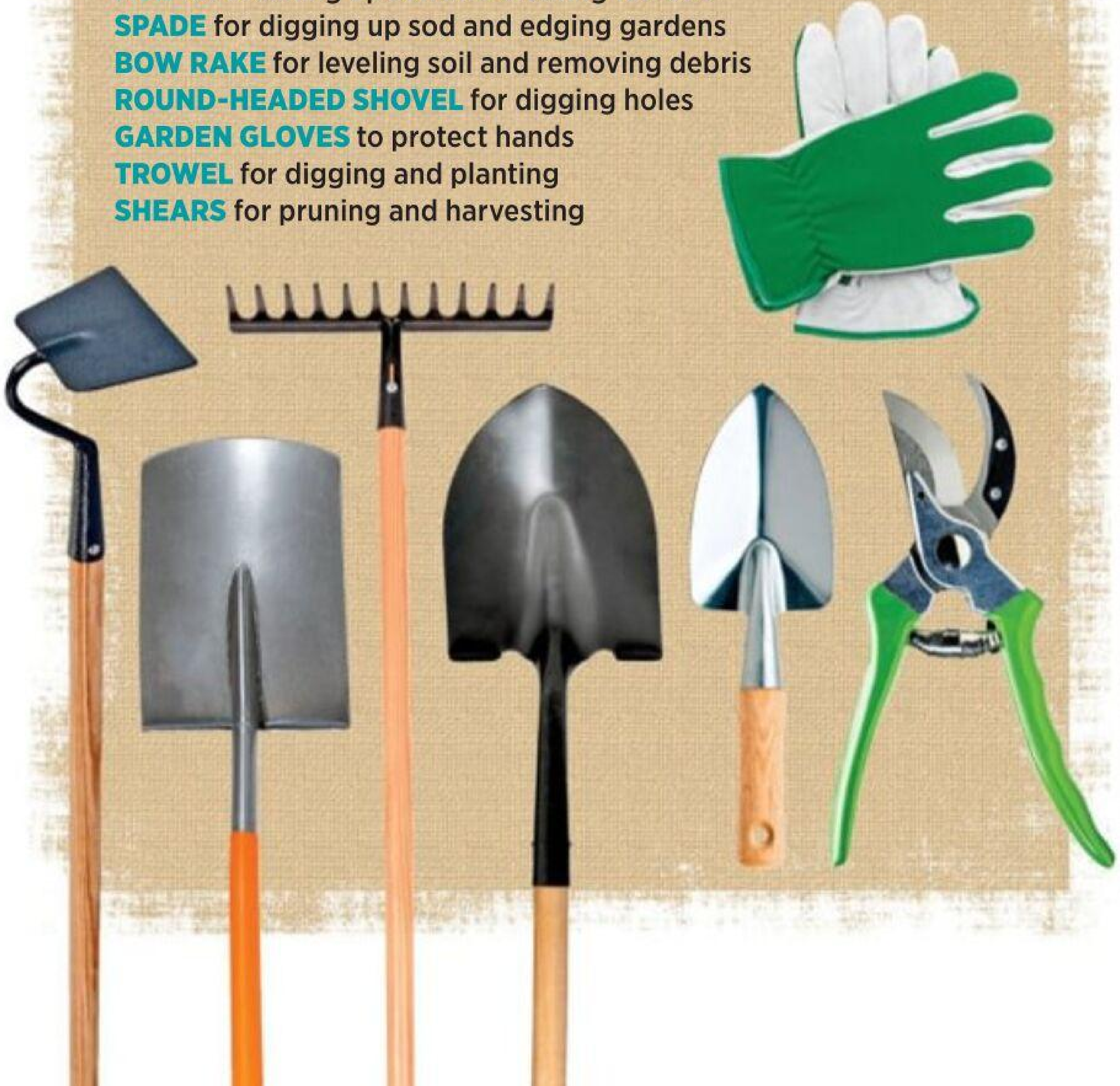
Everyone wants to grow juicy heirloom tomatoes to grace their summer meals. But tomatoes can be challenging to grow. You need the right soil, amount of sun and temperature to set the fruit (yes, tomatoes are fruit), then you must prevent bugs and squirrels from eating the produce before you can.

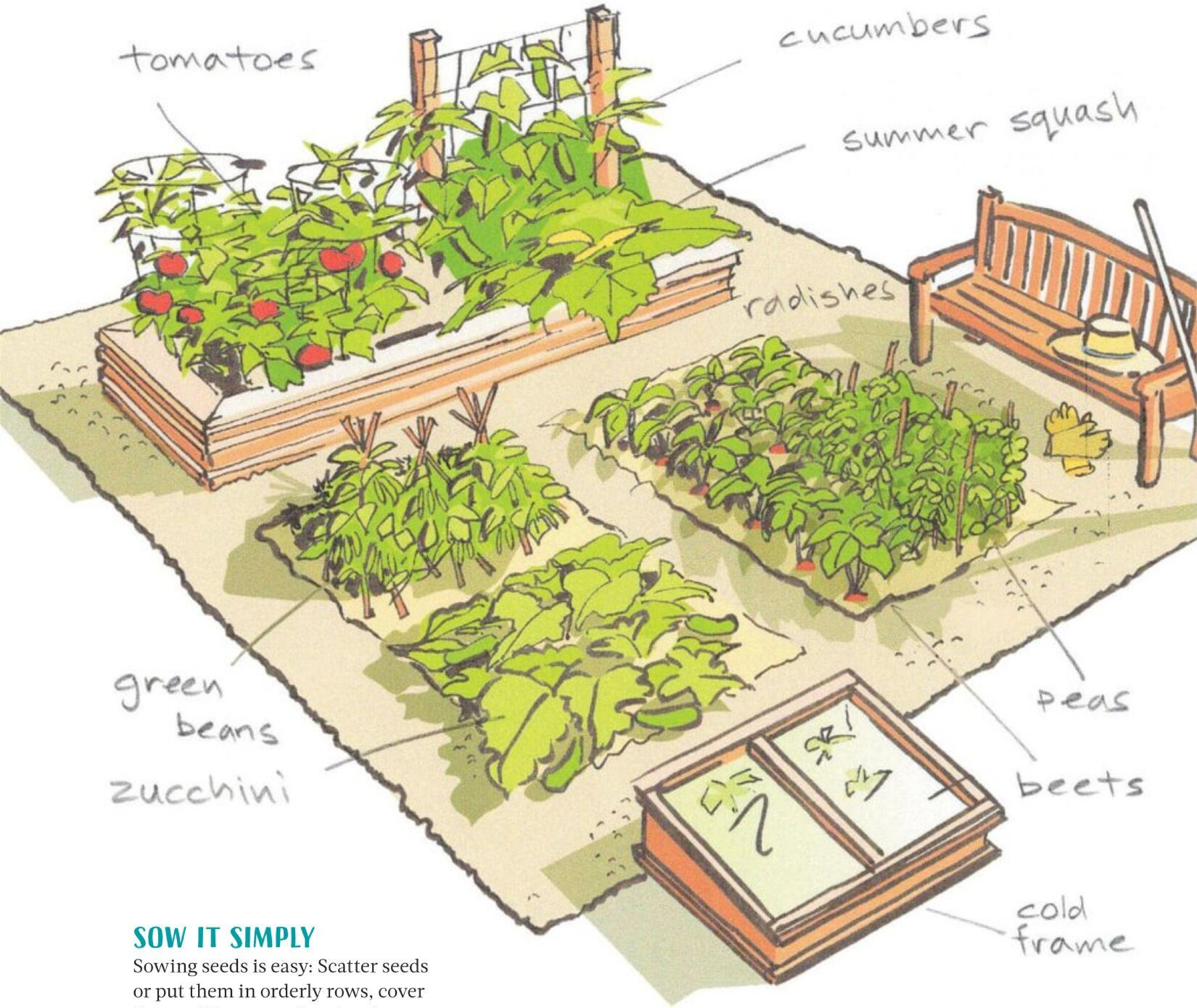
There are many types of vegetables that are easy for the rookie gardener to grow. It's almost impossible to wreck radishes, lettuce (unless you plant too late in the season), peas and parsley. Try zucchini for grin-inducing abundance, and garlic for a tasty treat that you'll use in many recipes.

TOOLS YOU NEED TO GET GOING

Like any new hobby, you'll need some special equipment to start your first garden. Happily, yard and estate sales are filled with used and inexpensive garden tools.

HOE for breaking up soil and creating furrows
SPADE for digging up sod and edging gardens
BOW RAKE for leveling soil and removing debris
ROUND-HEADED SHOVEL for digging holes
GARDEN GLOVES to protect hands
TROWEL for digging and planting
SHEARS for pruning and harvesting





SOW IT SIMPLY

Sowing seeds is easy: Scatter seeds or put them in orderly rows, cover them with some soil and water them. When the seeds germinate, you'll thin the seedlings so plants have plenty of room to grow.

An easier way is to plant seed strips–rolls of seeds embedded in degradable paper. Cover the strips with soil, sprinkle with water and watch plants grow without thinning.

Even easier is to plant seedlings from local nurseries and big box stores. They're stronger than newly germinated seeds, and if you buy them with blossoms, you'll derive instant gratification, as they'll bear fruit quickly.

TRY COLD-WEATHER GARDENS

Even if you live in an area with a short growing season, you can raise some vegetables after the weather turns chilly. Lettuce, spinach, radishes, asparagus, beets and carrots, among others, can grow in temps that average 15 degrees cooler than warm-weather veggies require. Broccoli and cauliflower can produce edible stems and leaves throughout the fall, until the first hard frost. ■

DON'T FORGET

If you go on vacation, ask a friend or neighbor to water your garden in hot weather, or set up a timer on your garden hose.

Plot Plan

This plot packs lots of potential into a modest 10- x 10-foot space. There's a large raised bed for tomatoes, cucumbers and squash, and smaller beds for green beans, beets and more, that are easy to care for, thanks to pathways. A cold frame gives young plants a good start.

How to Test Your Soil

Rich, fertile soil starts with a health checkup.

BY LISA KAPLAN GORDON

HEALTHY SOIL IS essential for your edible garden to grow big and strong. So it's important to give your dirt a physical every three years—tests that determine if it's robust or sickly. In fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says testing your soil is an "essential" tool for gardeners.

A home test kit will give you basic information and guidance about your soil, such as pH and the amount of plant-friendly nutrients it contains. For a more complete picture, consider sending a sample to a lab to find out every little thing about the earth under your feet.

HOW TO GATHER SAMPLES

Your yard probably contains many types of soil, each with a slightly different chemical composition and pH. Once you've determined where you want to grow your edible garden, take a dozen or so samples from different parts of the plot. Get the samples from about 6 inches down, mix them together then take 1 cup of the combined sample and test it yourself or send it to a soil-testing lab.

LABORATORY SOIL TESTS: THE GOLD STANDARD

Good soil is like a multivitamin for your plants. It will have a pH level of 6 to 6.5 and contain many of the nutrients that plants require—nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, calcium and magnesium.

The most complete and accurate soil information comes from a soil laboratory. Many county and state extension services maintain their own or have access to soil-testing labs. For about $20, you can send in a sample and receive a report on the nature of your soil. Many libraries have soil sample envelopes or containers that you fill and send to a lab.

Soil tests will determine your soil's pH, which is important to know when you choose which edibles to plant. Blueberries, for instance, like a strongly acidic soil, while asparagus enjoys a slightly alkaline home.

Tests also give you information on soil texture—coarse (sandy), medium (loamy) and fine (clay and silty)—amount of organic matter and how much lime or fertilizer you should add if your soil is too acidic or alkaline.

Technicians interpret the results and let you know if a particular number is high or low and what you must add to make your dirt the perfect place to grow edibles.

TEST IT YOURSELF

DIY testing kits range from about $7 to $30, depending on how much information you want. The accuracy of kits is debatable, though, and they often do not match laboratory results. But they're easy to use and results are fairly instantaneous—some only require you to thrust a probe a few inches into the earth—and most can at least provide you with a basic pH level.

If you still want to save some bucks, you can perform 10 simple tests developed by a team of Oregon farmers and scientists to determine soil quality. The Willamette Valley Soil Quality Guide basically tells you how to dig, water and squeeze soil to determine attributes like its structure, compaction, workability and number of organisms and earthworms. ■

KNOWING YOUR SOIL

POPULAR TEST KITS

[1]

Laboratory Soil-Test Kit from Whitetail Institute of North America (about $14) lets you send samples to a pro lab and get a report on fertility and pH.

[2]

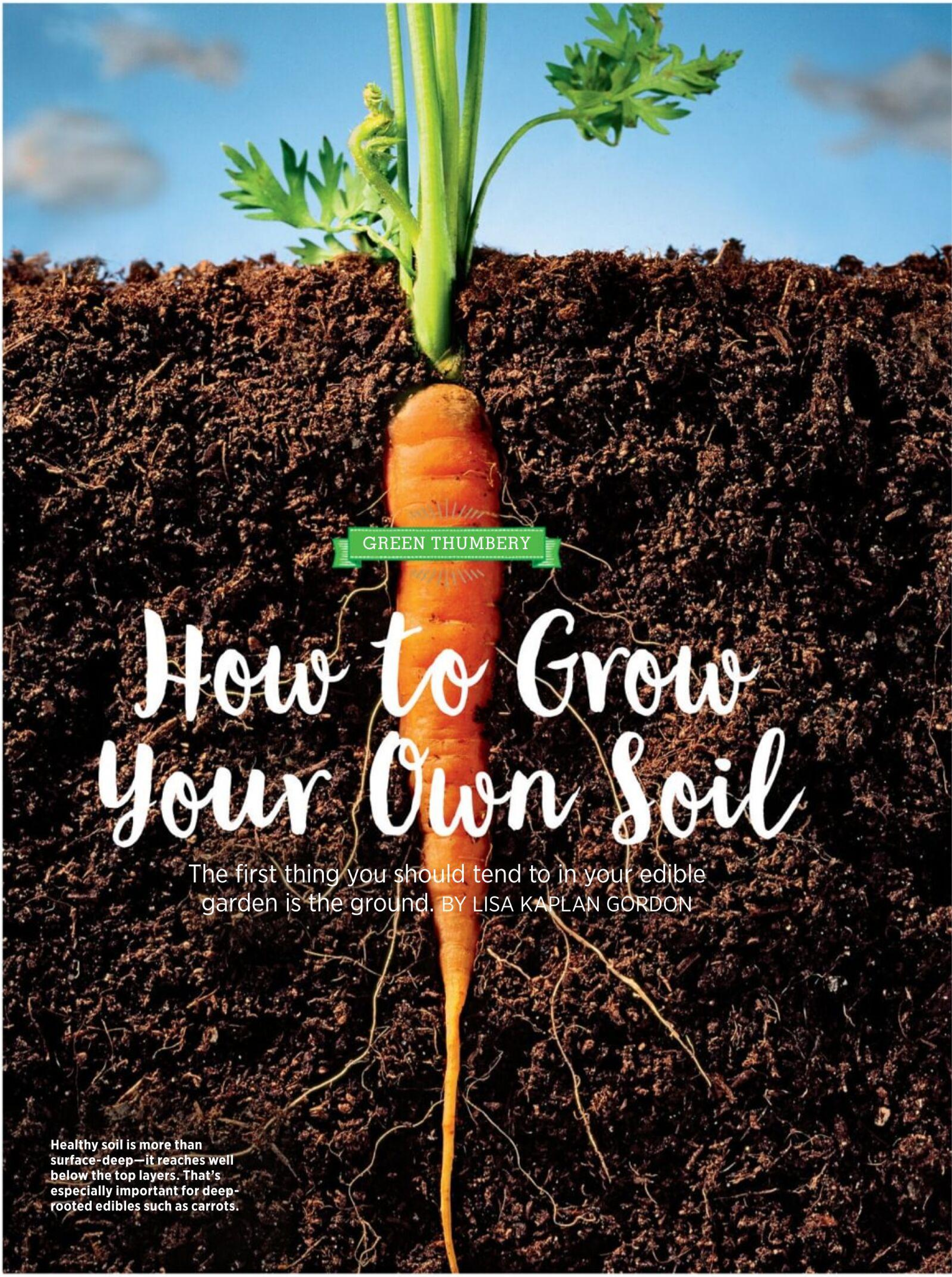
Luster Leaf 1601 Rapitest Soil Test Kit (about $15) checks soil pH, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

[3]

Moon City 3-Way Soil Meter (about $13) is a reusable probe that checks moisture content, pH and light.

2
luster leaf
40 Tests
rapitest Soil Test Kit
3
1
Professional Soil Testing Services
LABORATORY SOIL-TEST KIT

Earthworms are a sign of fertile soil. To test for the invertebrates, look for earthworm castings and burrows, then dig up a shovelful of topsoil about 6 inches down and count the number of crawlies you see. Five or more is good.



GREEN THUMBERY

How to Grow Your Own Soil

The first thing you should tend to in your edible garden is the ground. BY LISA KAPLAN GORDON

Healthy soil is more than surface-deep—it reaches well below the top layers. That's especially important for deep-rooted edibles such as carrots.

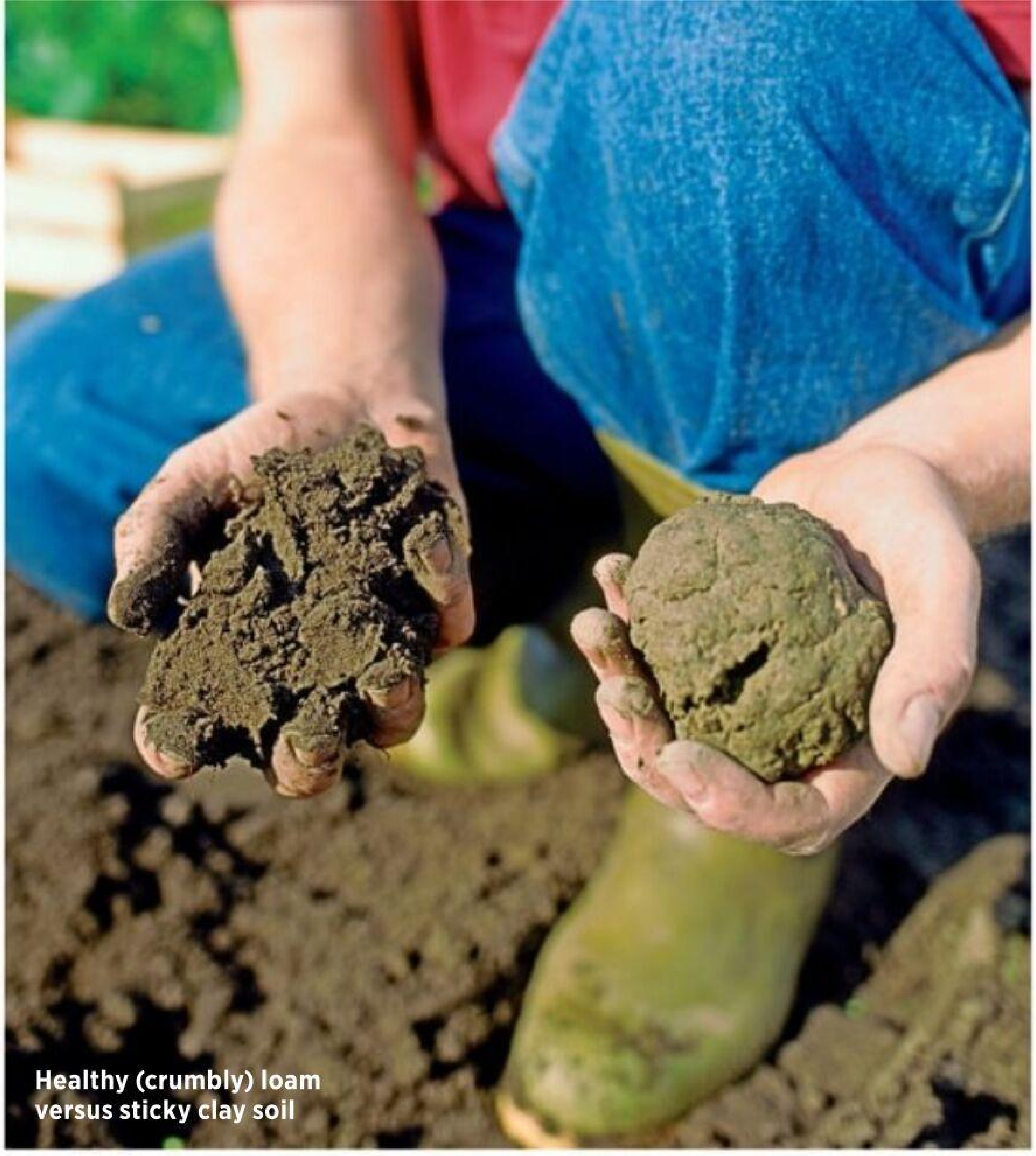
EDIBLE GARDENS are like the people who plant them–both need food. For plants, that means amending the soil so it holds enough water and nutrients to keep edibles strong and healthy.

Plants prefer crumbly dirt that's rich in organic material. It lets roots get to the water that transports nutrients. The organic material provides those essential nutrients, mostly nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

In nature, plants grow in patches of soil that contain exactly what they need to thrive. But in the gardening world, humans pick a garden spot–one that's sunny and not too far from the house–and hope the soil is a good fit.

Often it's not. Sometimes soil is compacted clay, which is a beast for roots to penetrate and grab the food the plant needs. Sometimes it is sandy, which lacks minerals and doesn't hold water long enough for plants to get a good meal.

Luckily, there are ways to make the ground just right. Don't fall into the trap that many first gardens do–don't skip testing your soil. You'll save a time and frustration if you diagnose you soil before planting. Once you've gotten your results, use the information below to give your plants the perfect soil.



Healthy (crumbly) loam versus sticky clay soil

CURE FOR SICKLY SOIL

In general, most vegetables like loose soil rich in nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, the familiar N-P-P notation you see on many fertilizer bags.

Organic matter in the form of compost is packed with plant nutrients and leavens clay soil so roots can easily spread when searching for water. If the test shows that your soil lacks appropriate plant food, liberally add compost and aged manure (rich in nitrogen). Then, mulch with aged grass clippings and leaf mold, which will slowly decompose and continuously feed your garden.

LEAVEN CLAY SOIL

The good news is that clay soil is often nutrient-rich; the bad news is that it holds water tightly and can become rock-hard, making roots work way too much to find the water they need.

To break up clay, add 2 or 3 inches of organic matter, which helps improve drainage. You can also plant in raised beds, which use gravity to help clay soil drain better.

If you've got lots of energy, plant a cover crop–winter wheat, winter rye, crimson clover–and till the plants into the soil in early spring. As they decompose, they'll feed and condition the clay soil.

SQUEEZE TEST

It's easy to spot clay-laden soil—simply grab a handful and squeeze. If it sticks together rather than crumbles, it's clay.

BEEF UP SANDY SOIL

Sandy soil, which has a gritty feel and is filled with large particles, loses water and nutrients before plants have a chance to benefit from them. To improve nutrients in sandy soil, add aged manure and compost; to help the soil retain water, add vermiculite or peat.

CHANGE SOIL PH

Most edibles grow best in soil with an almost neutral pH, from 6 to 7. The trick is to know what pH your vegetables need and then amend your soil to reach the optimal level.

To make dirt more acidic, add a couple of inches of sphagnum peat or water plants with a solution of two tablespoons of vinegar to a gallon of water.

To make soil more alkaline, add pulverized limestone to your garden. Follow directions on the bag or from your garden center. ■

GREEN THUMBERY

How to Make Great Compost

Don't toss it! Turn veggie trimmings and old leaves into the yummy (free) food your edible plants crave. BY LISA KAPLAN GORDON

You can create compost in any open bin, a closed box or even a big pile in the corner of your yard.

A DIY compost bin is simple to make with some old boards and a little ingenuity.

COMPOST IS LIKE an all-you-can-eat buffet for your edible garden. This rich, freshly made soil has the perfect texture–crumbly yet able to retain water–and loads of nutrients that plants need.

The great thing about compost is that it's all around you. Walk in the woods and kick up some leaves, and compost covers the ground. You know that pile of leaves you left in the corner of your yard last fall? There's probably a little compost forming there already.

You can buy bags of compost at any gardening center (less than $5 for 1 cubic foot), but hey–you can make your own nutritious compost for free. All that garden waste you once bagged up and tossed out contains the building blocks of compost and can become the foundation of your edible garden.

But the type of organic material you throw into your compost pile is the most important piece of the compost puzzle.

COMPOST RECIPE

Compost starts with layers of organic matter, carbon-based and nitrogen-rich material found in yard trimmings, vegetable and fruit scraps, leaves, grass clippings and some types of manure (alpaca manure makes a fine compost).

As these ingredients start to decompose, they break down into a stable soil that holds water, regulates soil temperatures and provides your plants with a nutrient-rich meal.

If you want to become a compost scientist, you'll need to know the exact ratio of carbon and nitrogen to create the perfect pile. But there's no need to fret about finding the best balance of carbon-rich "brown" organic matter (twigs, fallen leaves, dried grass, straw and other fibrous materials that help air circulate) and nitrogen-rich "green" matter, such as fresh grass clippings, freshly picked weeds, blossoms, fruit and vegetables, table scraps (but not meat), dead plants and flowers, and manure. It's all good.

GIVE IT A BOOST
An activator helps get your pile composting fast. Alfalfa meal, bone meal and rabbit manure all work. A little bit is all you need!

So relax. Your job is to pile up, water and occasionally turn whatever organics you have on hand. During the beginning of spring, you'll have lots of browns as you clean up the yard; in the summer, you'll have more greens as you weed and deadhead your gardens; in autumn, you'll have tons of fallen leaves–manna from heaven for your compost pile.

If you want to speed up the process, pulverize whatever you put in your composter. Add branches, leaves, even grass clippings to your shredder or chipper–it increases the surface area and speeds up the composting process. ■

A FEW COMPOSTING RULES

Don't put anything in a compost pile that you don't want in the plants you eat.

Never add manure from animals that eat meat.

Don't add diseased turf or plants to your compost pile, which will spread illness to new plants.

Don't add meat, which can attract harmful bacteria.

Here are some obvious things to add to your compost pile:

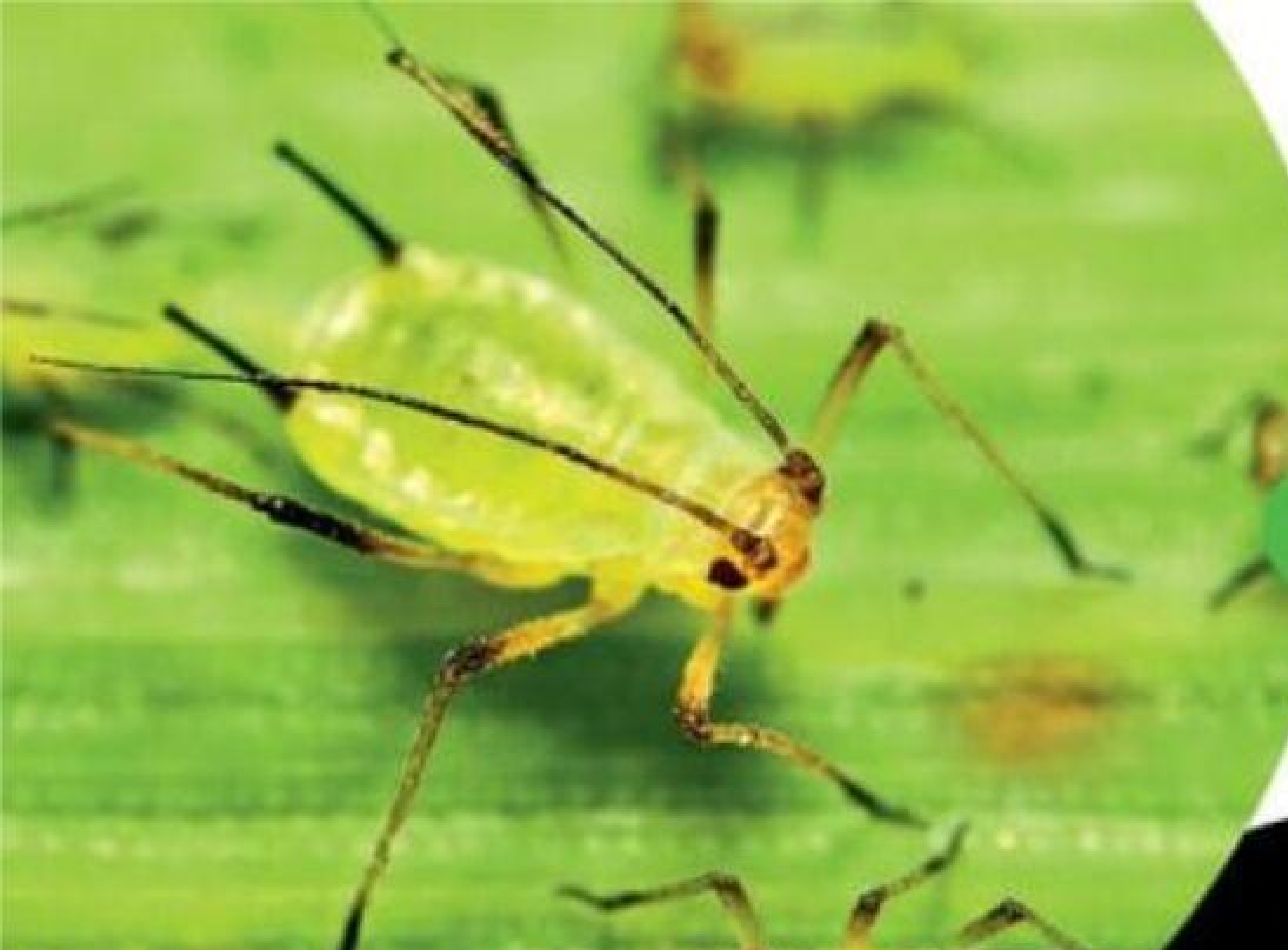
- Grass clippings
- Eggshells
- Veggie and fruit scraps
- Leaves
- Sawdust and wood shavings
- Pine needles and cones
- Peanut shells
- Cold wood ashes
- Straw and hay

And here are some things you wouldn't think you could add to your pile, but you can:

- Banana peels
- Lint
- Hair and fur
- Coffee grounds
- Shredded cereal boxes and egg cartons
- Shredded cloth

Garden Pests

Here's how to identify hungry bugs—and what you can do to protect your edibles from munching marauders.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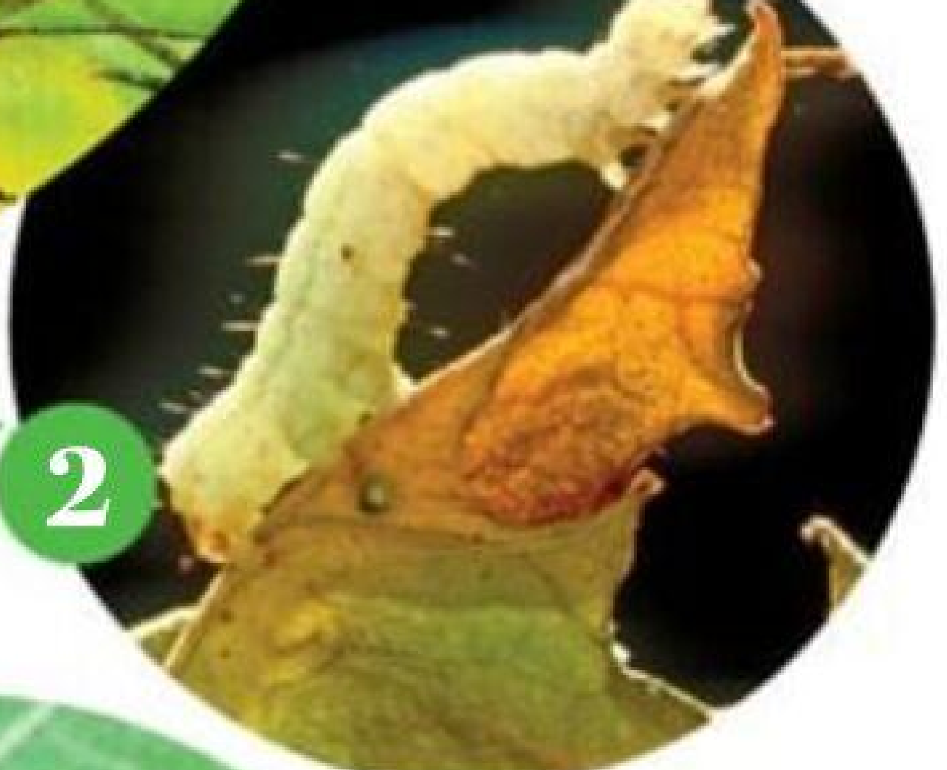
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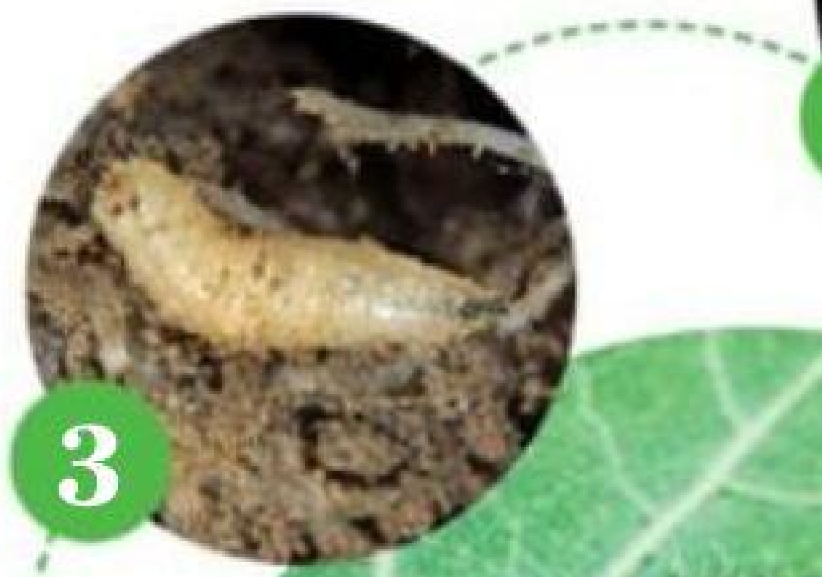
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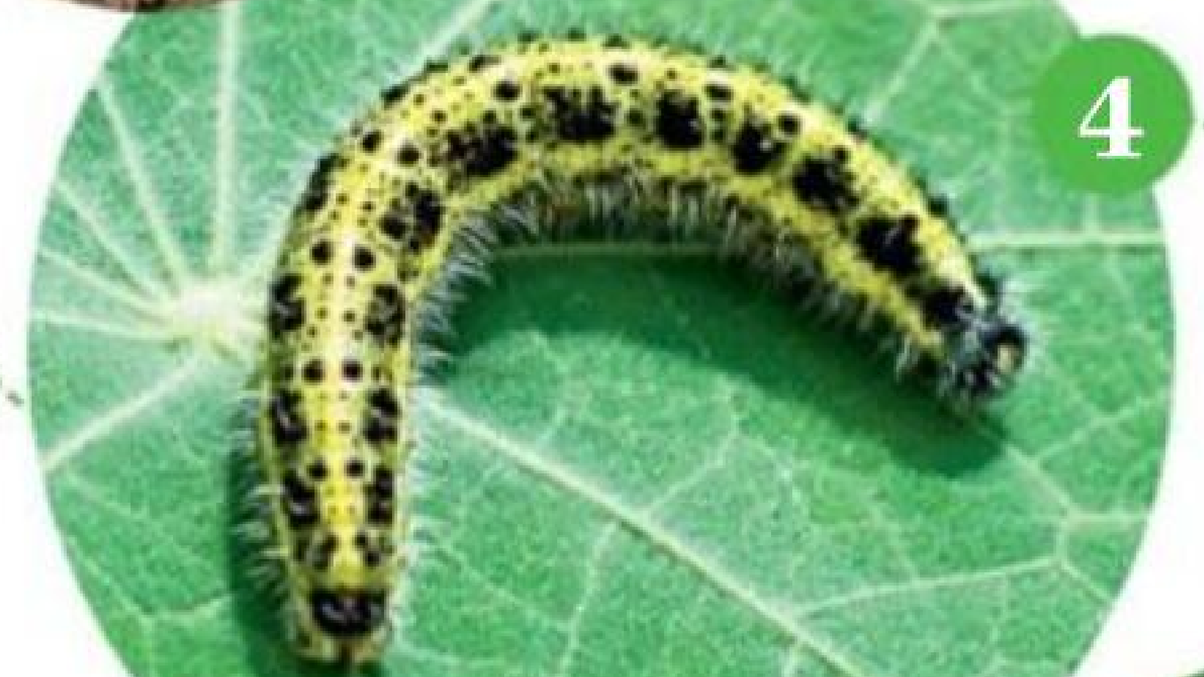
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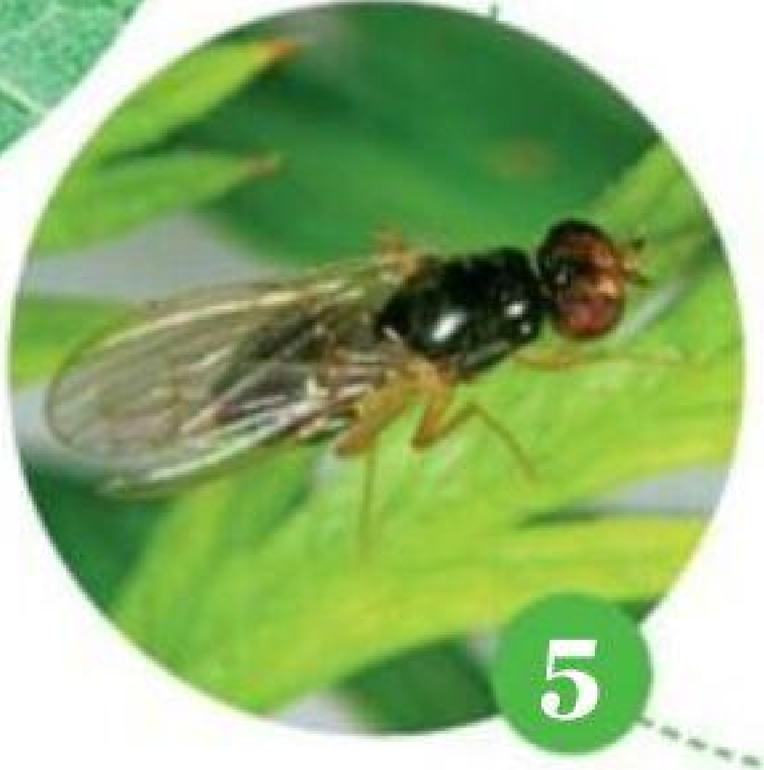
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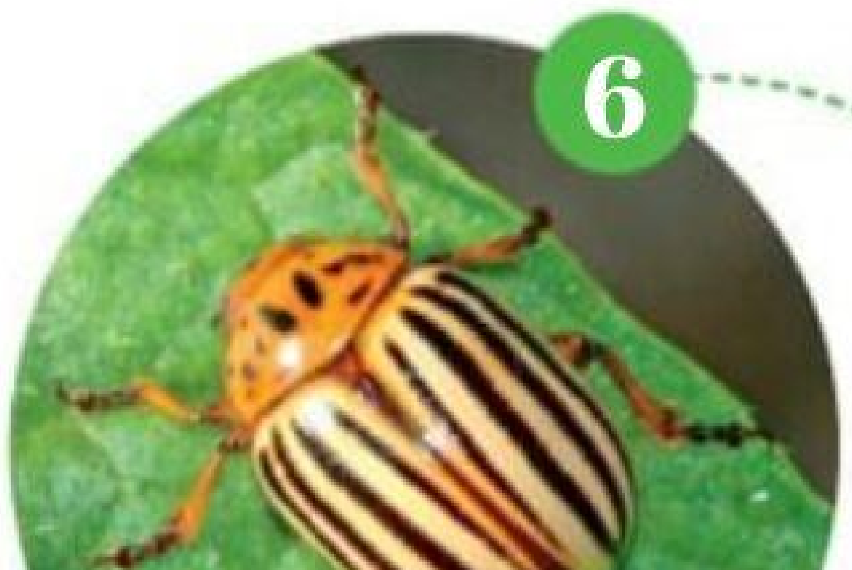
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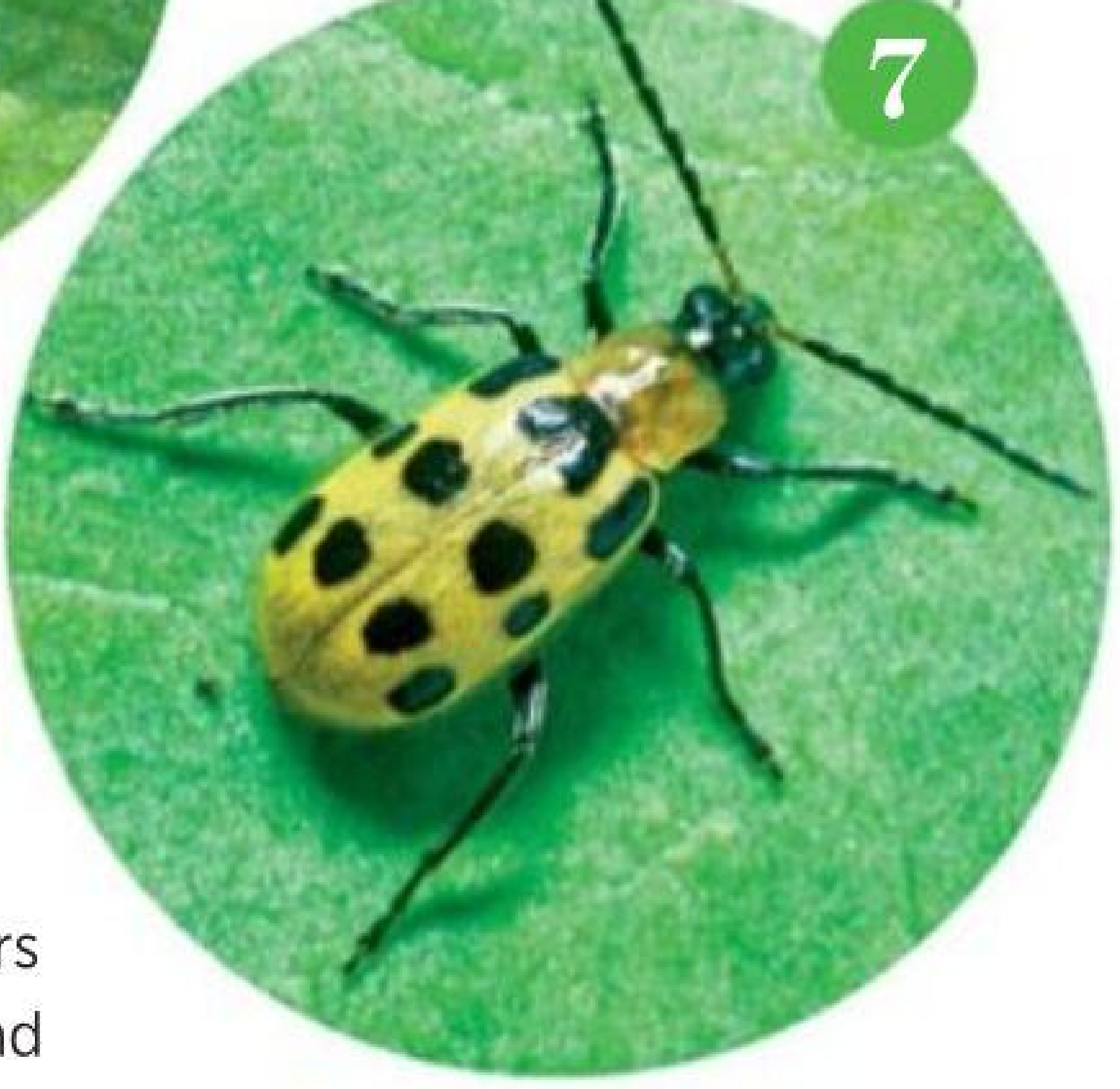
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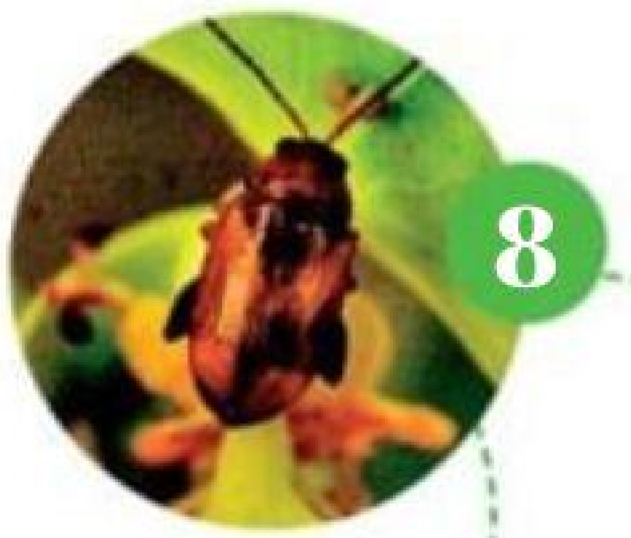
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1. APHID Tiny round insect. They tend to cluster on new leaves and stems. Often white, but may be black, green or pink. **Control Methods:** Knock aphids off with water from a garden hose. Spray with insecticidal soap. Protect young plants with row covers. **Beneficial Insects:** Lacewings, lady beetles (ladybugs)

2. CABBAGE LOOPER Green caterpillar, sometimes called an inchworm, that hunches its back as it moves. **Control Methods:** Pick off caterpillars with your fingers and destroy them. Check under leaves for clusters of small white eggs and scrape them off. **Beneficial Insects:** Trichogramma wasps

3. CABBAGE ROOT MAGGOT The larva of flies. Small white worms with pointed ends. **Control Methods:** Protect young plants with row covers. A tar-paper disk placed around the base of each plant discourages adult flies from laying eggs near the roots of cabbage-family plants. **Beneficial Insects:** Parasitic nematodes

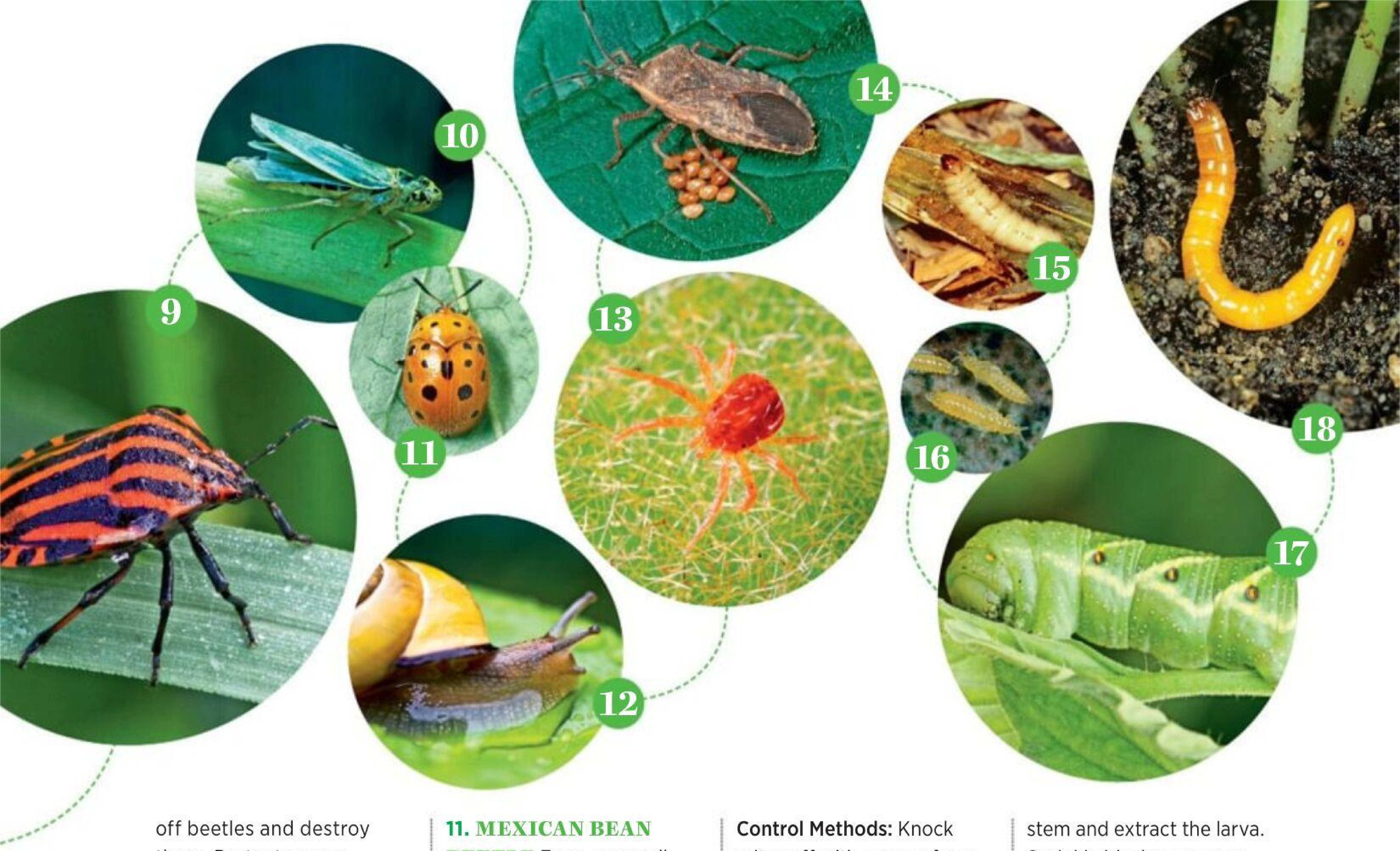
WHAT IS IT?
Not sure what kind of bug you're seeing? Send a photo to your state extension service for an ID or show it to your local nursery.

4. CABBAGE WORM Small, bright green caterpillar. **Control Methods:** Pick off caterpillars with your fingers and destroy them. Check under leaves for clusters of small yellow eggs and scrape them off. Protect young plants with row covers. **Beneficial Insects:** Trichogramma wasps

5. CARROT FLY Elongated insect with a large head that looks like an ant with wings. It lays eggs that turn into root-eating maggots that destroy plants from underground. **Control Methods:** Protect young plants with row covers. **Beneficial Insects:** Parasitic nematodes

6. COLORADO POTATO BEETLE A chubby beetle with yellow-and-black stripes. **Control Methods:** Pick off beetles with your fingers and destroy them. Pull up and discard infected plants. Spray with a solution containing *Bacillus thuringiensis tenebrionis*.

7. CUCUMBER BEETLE Oval-shaped beetle with yellow body and black spots. **Control Methods:** Pick



off beetles and destroy them. Protect young plants with row covers. **Beneficial Insects:** Parasitic nematodes

8. FLEA BEETLE Tiny black oval-shaped beetle that jumps when disturbed. **Control Methods:** Remove damaged plants. Protect young plants with row covers.

9. HARLEQUIN BUG Squarish beetle with distinctive black-and-red markings. **Control Methods:** Pick off bugs and destroy them. Look under leaves for masses of whitish, barrel-shaped eggs and scrape them off. Spray with insecticidal soap.

10. LEAFHOPPER Small oblong greenish insect that jumps or flies when disturbed. **Control Methods**: Protect young plants with row covers. **Beneficial Insects:** Lacewings, lady beetles (ladybugs)

11. MEXICAN BEAN BEETLE Eggs are small yellow clusters. Larva are yellowish, with spiky hairs. Adults are small beetles with yellowish-orange bodies and black spots. **Control Methods:** Pick off beetles and destroy them. Check under leaves for egg clusters and scrape them off. **Beneficial Insects:** Soldier beetles

12. SLUGS AND SNAILS Small mollusks that are active at night feeding on seedlings and leaves. **Control Methods:** Pick off slugs and snails and destroy them. Set out shallow dishes or commercial traps filled with beer—the slugs will crawl inside and drown. Protect plants with strips of copper or copper wire, which deter these mollusks.

13. SPIDER MITES Little spiders that weave webs on the undersides of leaves and draw juices out of leaves and stems. **Control Methods:** Knock mites off with a spray from a garden hose. Spray with insecticidal soap. **Beneficial Insects:** Predatory mites, lacewings

14. SQUASH BUG Large gray or dark-colored bug with a flat body and prominent antennae. **Control Methods:** Pick off bugs and destroy them. Look under leaves for clusters of reddish eggs and scrape them off. Spray with insecticidal soap. Protect young plants with row covers. **Beneficial Insects:** Soldier beetles, trichogramma wasps

15. SQUASH VINE BORER Dark-brown moth that lays eggs near stems. The eggs produce large white larva that settle inside stems to feed. **Control Methods:** Catch and kill the moths in the evening or early morning. Set out yellow sticky-strip traps. If a plant is infected, slit the stem and extract the larva. Sprinkle black pepper or diatomaceous earth around the plants to thwart larva.

16. THRIP Tiny insect that feeds on leaves by scraping off the surfaces, leaving foliage shiny. **Control Methods:** Knock thrips off plants with a spray from a garden hose. Set out yellow sticky-strip traps. B**eneficial Insects:** Lacewings

17. TOMATO HORNWORM Large green caterpillars with effective camouflage that makes them hard to spot. **Control Methods:** Pick off caterpillars and destroy them. **Beneficial Insects:** Braconid wasps

18. WIREWORM Reddish brown larva with a black head. They attack roots from under the soil. **Control Methods:** Trap wireworms by sticking carrots in the soil near crop plants. Retrieve after two days and destroy any infestations. ■

A GUIDE TO GROWING VEGGIES & HERBS

These popular vegetables and herbs are easy to grow, nutritious, and have plenty of fresh, just-picked flavor.

Artichokes

Exotic looks and rich flavors make this Mediterranean native a gourmet favorite.

Artichokes are not only tasty, they also can be bold, boisterous ornamentals. With big edible buds that form on top of long stalks surrounded by fountains of spreading leaves, artichokes make an impressive architectural statement.

You can take the ripe artichoke buds for eating in early summer, but if you don't harvest them, the buds will open into handsome purplish flowers up to 6 inches across. Let the flowers populate your garden, or cut them for spectacular bouquet arrangements.

Native to Mediterranean regions, artichokes prefer mellow climates where they'll become reliable perennials; mild coastal areas are ideal. In harsher regions, the plant is likely to be a fussier annual with some flowers but fewer–if any–edible buds.

TO GROW Start seeds indoors eight to 12 weeks before the last frost. After the danger of frost has passed, plant starts in a warm, sunny area, spaced 4 to 6 feet apart. Water generously once a week.

TO HARVEST Take the buds when they are nice and round but still firm. If your harvest is relatively early, try for a second crop by cutting down stalks to about an inch or two above the ground. Help the plants winter over with a heavy layer of mulch.

PESTS Slugs, snails and earwigs like artichokes. Aphids can be a problem, too, but you can knock them off with a jet of water from your garden hose.

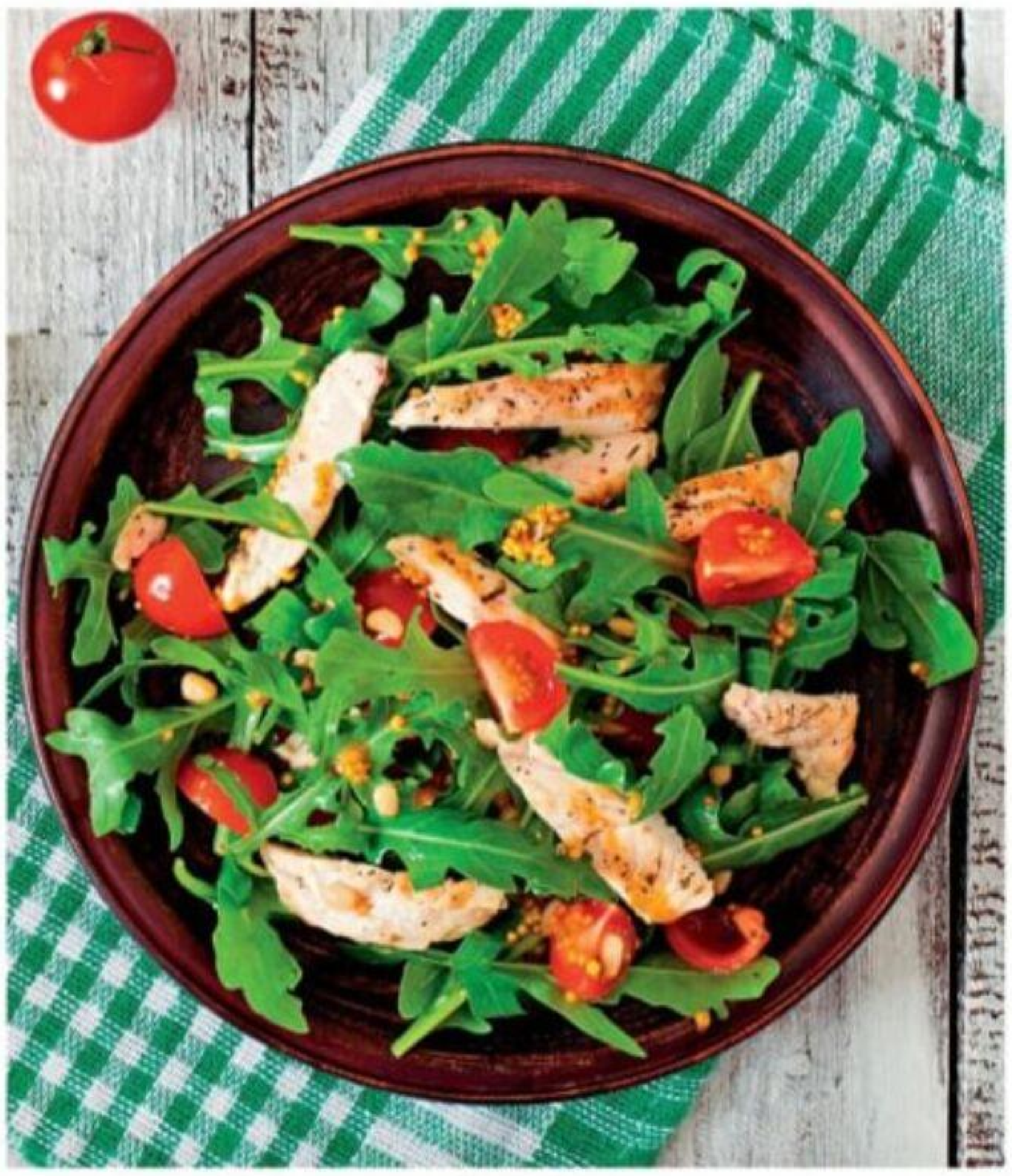
BEST ZONES 8→12 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞

Arugula

Spicy arugula is full of healthful vitamins, antioxidants and minerals.

A zestful addition to an early summer salad, arugula is easy to grow. Tender young leaves are 1 to 4 inches long and taste a bit like horseradish. Mix with other greens to create a piquant addition to a meal.

Arugula is a hearty plant that grows in most zones. It prefers cool weather, so you'll want to get it going as soon as the threat of frost has passed. If your weather is mild, try planting a second crop in late summer.



TO GROW Sow seeds in rows a half-inch deep or simply scatter across a patch. Water and weed regularly, and thin the plants if they get too crowded—6 to 8 inches apart is ideal.

TO HARVEST Get arugula started early in spring and harvest the leaves before warm weather makes them too bitter. It's easiest to harvest the entire plant—roots and all—but if you take the time to cut off the leaves about an inch above the ground, you may get a second crop. If you let some of your plants go to flower, arugula will reseed itself for next year.

PESTS Not many bugs, slugs or other creatures have a taste for arugula.

BEST ZONES 2→9 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞

Asparagus

Asparagus takes some time to get going, but once established, this perennial will provide plenty of healthful eating for years to come.

Growing asparagus requires an investment of time and faith, but the rewards are high. You won't get a crop the first year, and probably not even the second. But if you're patient, your asparagus patch will start producing plenty of tasty, succulent green spears year after year.

There are a few varieties of asparagus, and you might want to try two or three types to experiment with different tastes and colors and see which kind does best in your garden. Once it's established, asparagus is very cold-tolerant. If you leave a few uncut stalks in your garden, asparagus will produce delicate, flowing foliage for you to enjoy the rest of the season.

TO GROW Creating an asparagus bed is a bit of an art. Dig a trench 1 foot deep and 1 foot wide (if you're making several trenches, space them 4 feet apart). Fill each trench halfway with loose soil mixed with manure and starter fertilizer. Plant "crowns"—immature plants you'll find at a nursery that sells vegetable starts. Set them 6 inches below the top of the trench, spacing the crowns about 1 foot apart. Cover roots with 2 inches of soil and soak the bed thoroughly. As the plants grow, gradually fill in the trench, being careful not to cover the tender growing tips.

TO HARVEST Don't cut any spears the first year. Let the plants mature and cut them to the ground when the foliage turns brown in autumn. In the second year, you may take a few spears, but if the shoots look thin, let the plants grow. Weed regularly and add fertilizer. In the third year, you should be able to take a full crop. Always stop harvesting if the spears begin to look thin or stressed.

PESTS Asparagus beetles get their name from their fondness for their favorite snack. You can clear them off plants with a gentle stream of water.

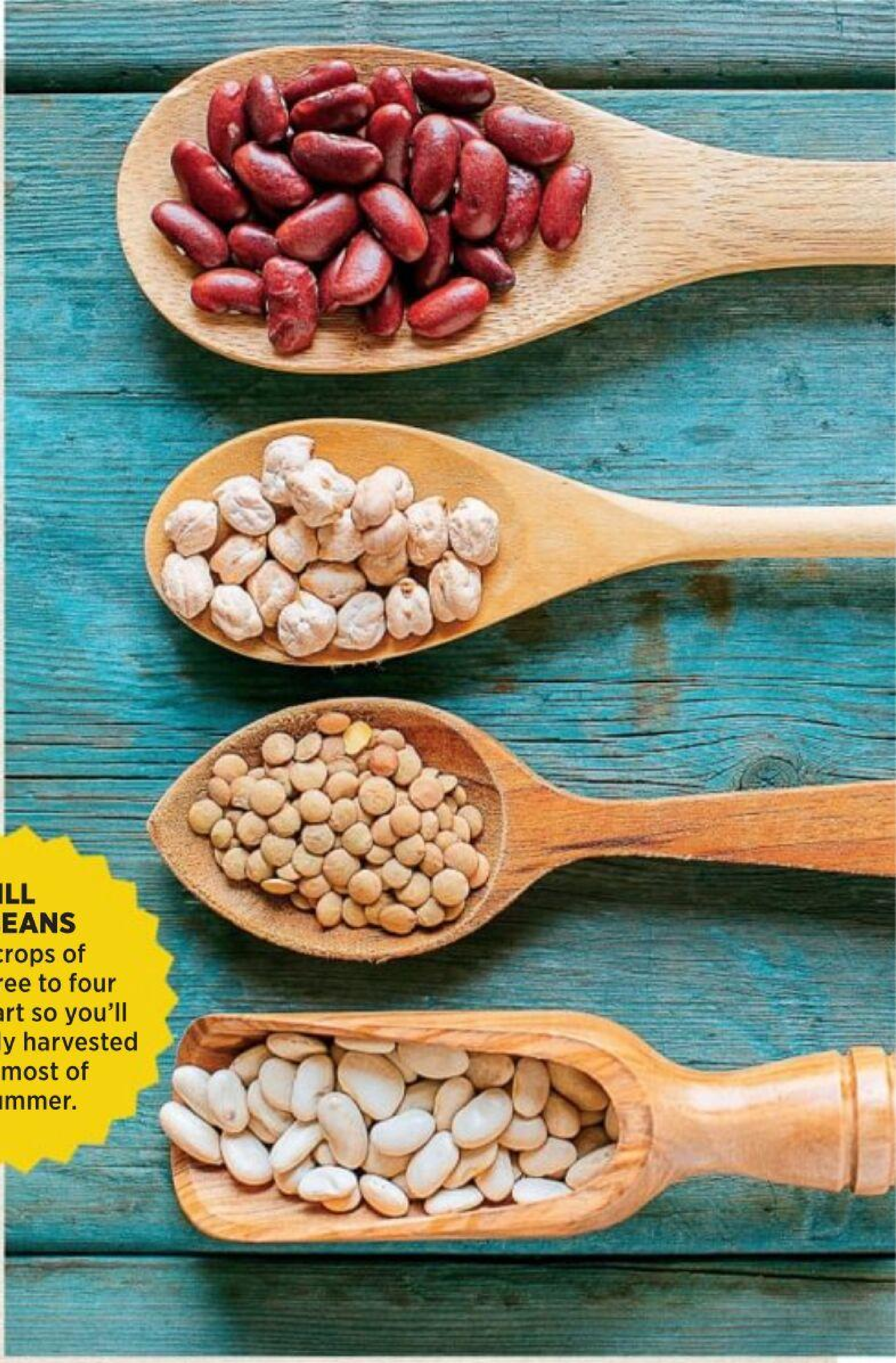
BEST ZONES 4→9 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞

Beans

Beans are some of the easiest, most carefree vegetables to grow, and they can be used in hundreds of tasty recipes.

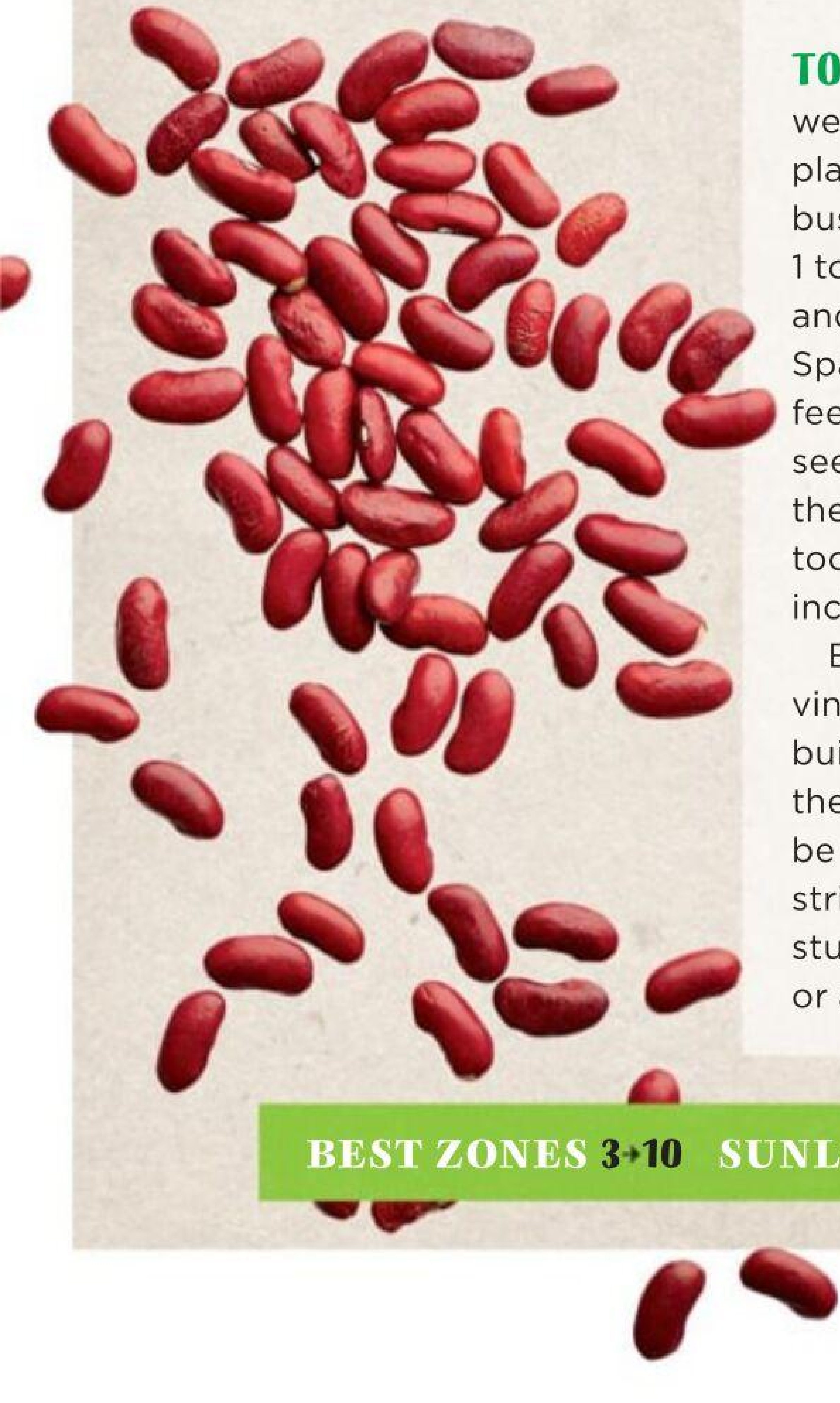
Beans are a rich source of dietary protein and an excellent addition to the edible garden. They are basic ingredients in many types of ethnic cuisines and tasty in soups and salads. Some varieties are known for their sweet, edible pods. There are beans you pick and eat right away, and some that you can dry and store. You'll find beans in a variety of delightful shapes and colors.

There are two types for the garden: vining beans that must be supported by a structure, and bush beans that are shrubby plants. Both are easy to grow. Common varieties for the home garden include red or kidney, butter, lima, fava, pinto, lentil and green.



HILL OF BEANS

Plant crops of beans three to four weeks apart so you'll have freshly harvested beans most of the summer.



TO GROW When the weather turns warm, plant the seeds of bush-type beans 1 to 2 inches deep and 2 inches apart. Space rows 2 to 3 feet apart. When seedlings appear, thin them so they're not too crowded—4 to 6 inches apart.

Before planting vining (pole) beans, build a structure for them to climb. It can be wire or landscape string laced between sturdy poles, a trellis or an A-frame made of wood. The classic bean structure is a 4- to 6-foot-high teepee made of bamboo poles or sticks.

Plant vining bean seeds next to your support structure, 1 to 2 inches deep and 6 inches apart. Water newly planted seeds generously. As the beans begin to grow, water less frequently with deep soakings.

TO HARVEST To eat beans right off the bush or vine, pick them when the pods are full yet are still green. Open the pods and "shell" the beans into a bowl.

If you want beans for drying and storing, let the pods mature until they are dry and begin to split. Then remove the beans and discard the dried pods.

PESTS Beans attract aphids and Mexican bean beetles. Check for small yellow larvae and the undersides of leaves for clusters of tiny yellow eggs and destroy any you find.

BEST ZONES 3→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞🐞

TRY THE TOPS! Beet greens have lots of nutrients and have a slightly sweet, mild flavor. Use within three days of picking, or freeze.

Beets

This colorful garden veggie is easy to grow and is reputed to help lower blood pressure.

Beets are root vegetables that prefer to grow in cool weather. You can plant them in early spring, but they'll do better (and be tastier) if you plant them in late summer for an early winter harvest. They're fast-growing and frost-resistant, so they're a good crop for northern climes. They come in many colors and shapes. The varieties called 'Detroit Dark Red' and 'Crosby's Egyptian' have the classic deep red color.

TO GROW Sow seeds 1 to 2 inches apart and cover with a thin layer of compost. Keep them well-watered and thin the plants as they grow in well-drained soil. When they reach several inches high, add mulch to keep the soil from drying out.

TO HARVEST Start harvesting when roots get 1 to 2 inches wide. You won't want them to get bigger than 3 inches, or the root will get tough and woody.

PESTS Keep an eye out for Mexican bean beetles. They look like ladybugs but they're orange or yellow rather than red. Check for small yellow larvae and the undersides of leaves for clusters of tiny yellow eggs and destroy any you find.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞

Broccoli

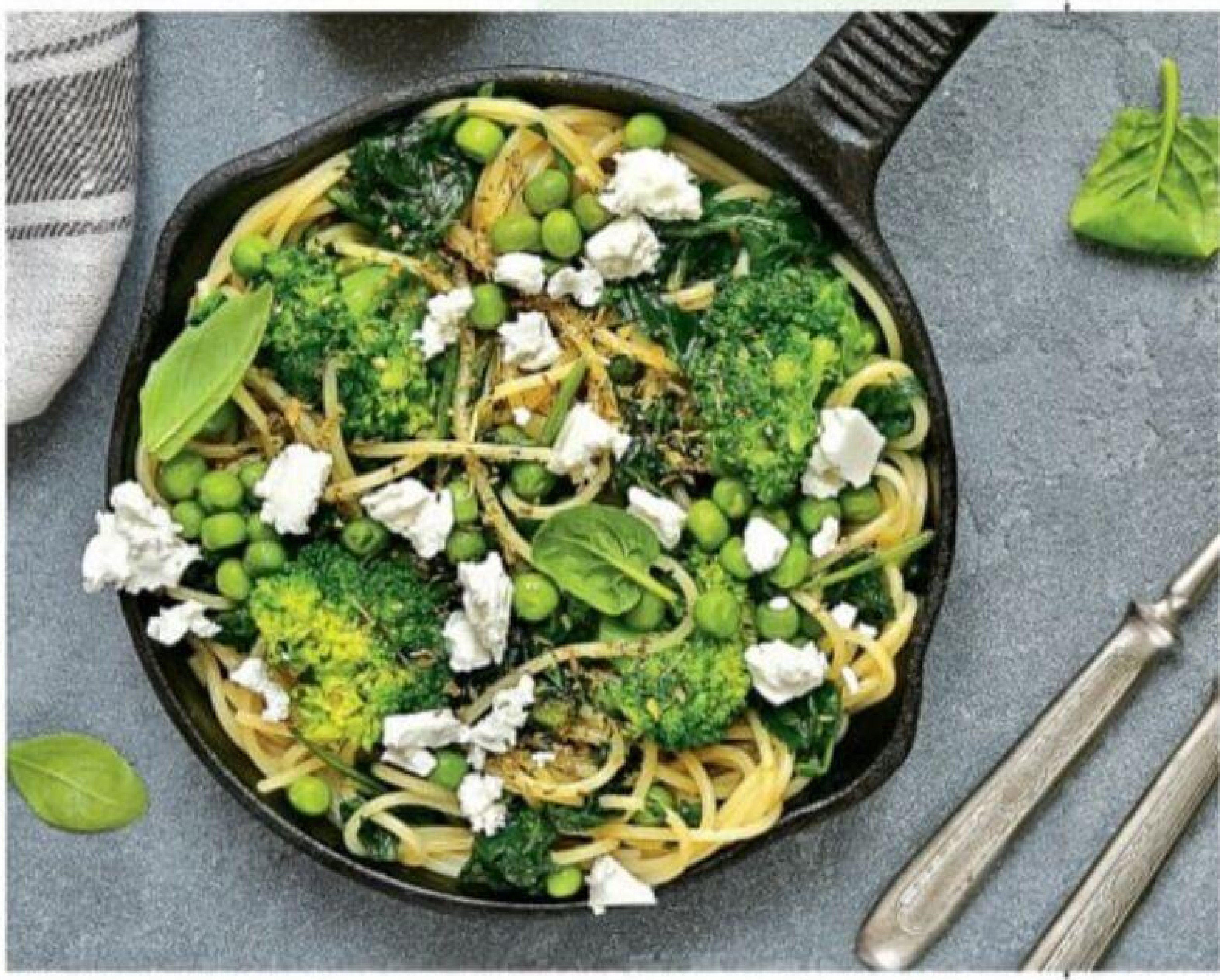
A cool-season vegetable, tasty broccoli grows best with lots of sunlight.

Broccoli, a dinnertime favorite, usually is thought of as a vegetable head made up of tightly packed green florets, but some newer versions are purple or yellow, and have splayed florets. Broccoli rabe (or raab), a relative of common broccoli, has a stronger flavor. Broccoli is easy to grow, but it prefers the cool weather of an early spring or late summer planting.

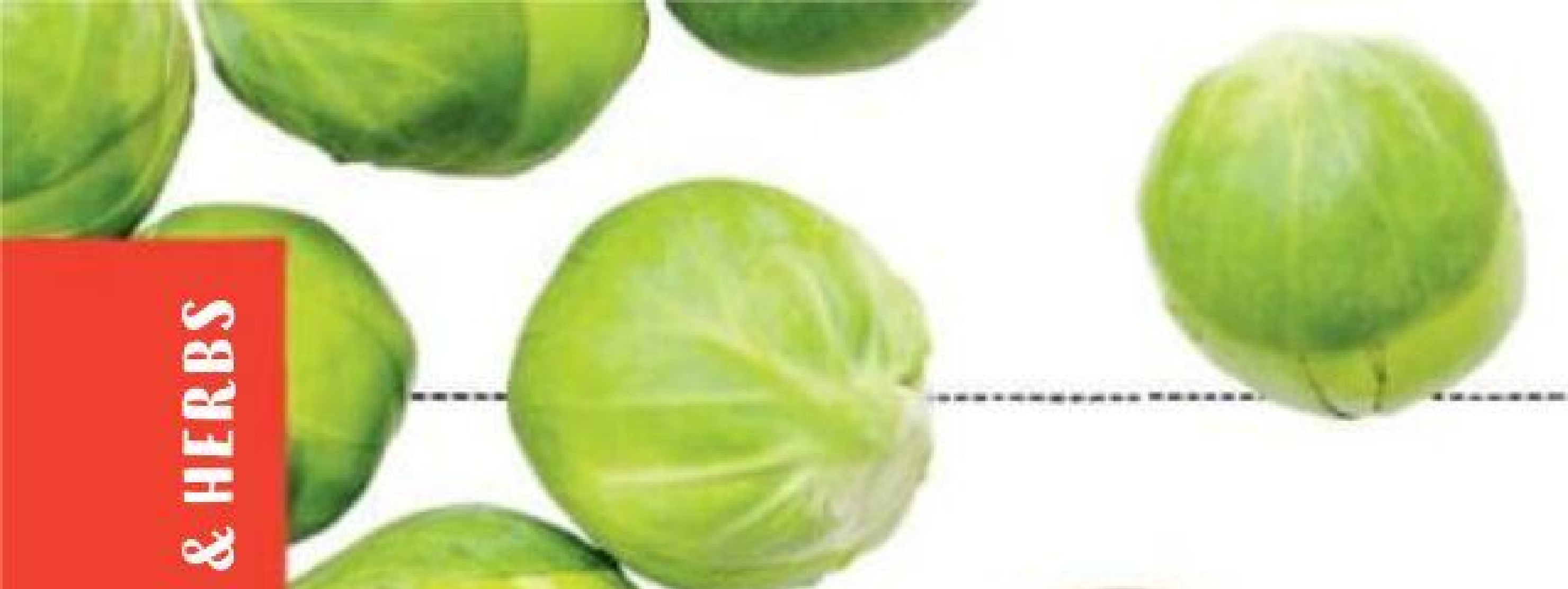
TO GROW Plant seedlings in early spring or fall. Space the plants 2 feet apart, leaving 3 feet between rows. Water regularly and deeply, and add a fertilizer before the heads appear.

TO HARVEST Your crop should be ready to harvest two to three months after planting seedlings. When the heads are full, cut the broccoli, taking at least 3 inches of stem.

PESTS Lots of pests like broccoli, including aphids, cabbageworms and root maggots. Protect your crop with row covers.



BEST ZONES 3→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞



Brussels Sprouts

These little globes of goodness are enjoying a culinary revival and can be found in many tasty recipes.

Small veggies with big flavor and lots of vitamins, Brussels sprouts are related to cabbages. When they're mature, Brussels sprouts look like little palm trees, with big fronds (leaves) and gnarly trunks that are studded with sprouts. They like cool weather, so you'll want to set out seedlings in early spring after the frost has passed, or in late summer for an early winter harvest. A single plant can be prolific, producing 50 to 100 sprouts for harvesting.

TO GROW If you're growing from seed, sow seeds a half-inch deep and 2 to 3 inches apart in rows spaced two to three feet apart. When the seedlings are 4 to 5 inches tall, thin them so they're 18 to 24 inches apart. Water and weed regularly.

TO HARVEST Sprouts are ready to harvest when the big lower leaves of the plant begin to turn yellow. Snap off the sprouts with your fingers. You can harvest the lower sprouts first, leaving the top of the plant to continue growing and producing more sprouts. Take off the lower leaves to encourage upward growth from the plant.

PESTS Aphids, cabbage worms, harlequin bugs and flea beetles all have a fondness for Brussels sprouts. Spray plants with an insecticidal soap and pull up any heavily infected plants and destroy them. Row covers are a good way to protect young plants.

QUICK & EASY

TASTY BRUSSELS SPROUTS

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 4 to 6 tablespoons olive oil
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Trim bottoms of Brussels sprouts, and slice each in half, top to bottom. Heat oil in cast-iron pan over medium-high heat until it shimmers; put sprouts cut-side down in one layer in pan. Put in garlic, then sprinkle with salt and pepper. **2.** Cook, undisturbed, until sprouts begin to brown on bottom, then transfer to oven. Roast, shaking pan every five minutes, until sprouts are quite brown and tender, about 10 to 20 minutes. **3.** Put in a bowl, stir in the vinegar and serve hot.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞

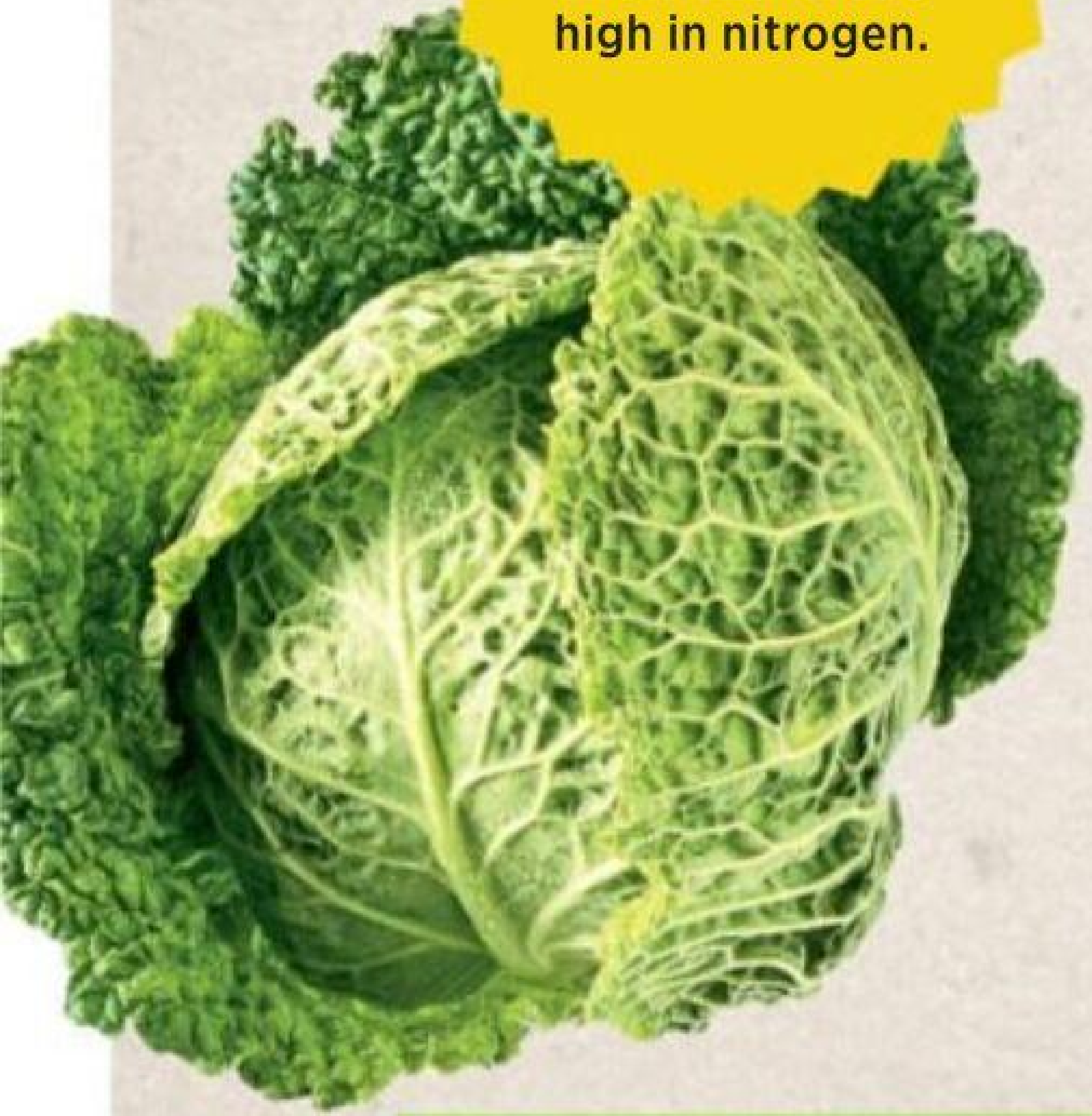
Cabbages

Crunchy cabbages are full of antioxidants and are an excellent source of vitamin C.

Cabbage comes in many shapes, textures and flavors. You'll find them with crinkly green leaves, smooth pale green leaves and blue-green leaves with purple veins. Showy ornamental cabbages are a fun addition to the backyard garden, and you can grow them in pots for a deck or patio. Cabbages do well in cool weather, but a few varieties, such as 'Ruby Ball' and 'Stonehead,' tolerate hotter climes.

Most cabbages appreciate an early start, so plant in spring about two weeks before the last frost. Cooler weather makes for a tastier plant—aim to harvest before warm weather sets in.

BIG & BOLD
During the growing season, feed your cabbage plants with a fertilizer that's high in nitrogen.



TO GROW Set nursery transplants 1 to 2 feet apart in rows spaced 2 to 3 feet apart. Sow seeds a half-inch deep and 1 to 2 inches apart, and thin the seedlings when they're 5 inches tall. They don't need full sun, so a partially shaded location is fine. They do like water, however, so keep the ground moist and mulch the plants to conserve moisture in the soil. Cabbages have shallow roots, so be careful when weeding the beds.

TO HARVEST Take cabbages when the heads are plump but firm, cutting off the heads close to the soil. Discard any dry or wilted outer leaves. Cabbages are eager growers, and a single 10-foot-long row can yield up to 25 pounds of cabbage.

PESTS Garden invaders that like cabbages include aphids, cabbage loopers, harlequin bugs, cabbage root maggots and cabbage worms.

BEST ZONES 1→9 **SUNLIGHT** ●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Carrots

Bugs Bunny's favorite snack is loaded with vitamin A.

It's always a thrill to pull the first fresh carrot right out of the ground at harvest season. You can ensure a tasty, well-formed crop by giving carrots plenty of room to grow in loose, lightly textured soil that's free of stones and old roots–raised beds and deep containers are ideal. If you don't have at least 1 foot of depth, try growing short and miniature carrot varieties.

Carrots come in lots of colors, too. Try purple, white and blood-red types in salads and side dishes.

TO GROW Carrots don't mind cool weather, so you can plant seeds a good month before the last scheduled frost. Sow seeds a half-inch deep in rows that are spaced at least 1 foot apart in well-tilled, loose soil. When the tops are 2 inches tall, thin the plants so they're at least 3 inches apart. Don't add too much manure or nitrogen-rich fertilizer, or the root will start to fork apart. Carrots like even moisture, so don't alternate dry periods with deep soakings. Plant a late-season crop in early fall. For the tastiest carrots, leave them in the ground until after the first winter frost.

TO HARVEST You can start to harvest tender young carrots when they're as big as a thumb—usually about 40 days. Take them as you need them over the next month or so. Pull the carrot out by its top, grasping it near the soil. In mild climates, you can store carrots by covering the rows with a foot of mulch and leaving them in the ground.

PESTS The aptly named carrot fly can detect carrots from up to half a mile away. You can fool them by planting chives near your carrots to mask their smell.

BEST ZONES 4→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞

BLANCHING
Cauliflower heads are normally yellow. For pure white, “blanch” plants by folding the upper leaves over the head to keep sunlight off the florets.

Cauliflower

A relative of the cabbage, cauliflower needs constantly cool temps to produce beautiful, meaty heads.

Cauliflower is a great addition to a dinnertime menu, but it can be challenging to grow. It likes moderate, Mediterranean climates and plenty of moisture. Letting the soil dry out too much may stunt the growth of the heads.

You can grow it with an early-spring or late-summer planting to take advantage of cool temperatures. Cauliflowers don’t like hot spates, and a late-autumn crop should yield more flavorful heads.

Give your cauliflower every advantage by testing the pH level of your soil. You’ll want the level to be between 6.5 and 6.8. Add periodic feedings of nitrogen-rich fertilizer. Heads are typically whitish, but you can get cauliflowers with yellow and bright purple heads, too.

TO GROW For a spring planting, get an early start by growing young plants indoors for four weeks before the last frost. Put the plants 2 feet apart in rows 3 feet apart. If you’d rather grow directly from seed, sow seeds a half-inch deep and 2 inches apart. Thin the seedlings when they’re several inches tall. Keep the soil well-watered.

TO HARVEST Cauliflowers take 10 to 12 weeks to fully mature. When it’s close to harvest time, check the heads frequently to make sure they’re plump and firm but that the buds haven’t opened up. The heads should be 6 to 8 inches wide. Cut the stem with a knife, and keep a few leaves in place to protect the head.

PESTS Like its cousins cabbage and broccoli, cauliflower is susceptible to attack from aphids, cabbage loopers, cabbage worms, cabbage root maggots and harlequin bugs. Pick off any pests you see and destroy them. You can protect young cauliflowers with row covers, but note that the plant’s leaves will want to spread out quite a bit as it grows.

BEST ZONES 4→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Celery

Crunchy celery is a mainstay of salads and stir-fries. Add the spicy leaves to fresh salads, too.

Crispy celery is a cool-weather-loving plant, so you'll want to plant it in early spring. In mild climates where nighttime temps rarely get below 50°F, plant it in fall and harvest in winter.

To get celery that's green and tasty, blanch the plants three to four weeks before harvest to keep sunlight off: Tie the stalks together with gardening twine and heap loose dirt up the sides of the plant to cover the stalks. You can also wrap them with newspaper, but make sure to expose the leaves.

TO GROW It takes time to grow celery from seed, so plant seeds indoors eight to 10 weeks before the last scheduled frost. When the frost has passed, plant the seedlings 10 inches apart in rows two feet apart. Celery likes moisture, so water the rows evenly. Feed the plants regularly with a nitrogen-rich fertilizer.

TO HARVEST When the stalks are firm and the leaves are beginning to pale, it's time to harvest. It is traditional to cut celery down just below the base where all the stalks meet.

PESTS Keep an eye out for aphids, cabbage loopers, leafhoppers and nematodes. Knock off any bugs with a spray from a garden hose. If infections persist, apply an insecticidal soap mixed with water.

INSECTICIDAL SOAP
Mix 5 tbsp. of real liquid soap, such as Castile, in 1 gallon of water. Don't use detergent. Apply with a spray bottle.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞

Cucumbers

Cukes can take summer's heat. Try "nonbitter" varieties for extra sweetness.

Who doesn't like cucumbers? Juicy and crisp, freshly picked cukes are a mainstay of summer salads, and homemade pickles are a year-round treat.

There are two basic types of cucumbers–slicers and picklers. Slicers are smooth-skinned, dark green and perfect for eating right off the vine. Picklers tend to be shorter and rough-skinned. The truth is that either can be used for slicing or pickling. In addition, there are fanciful varieties, including lemon cukes that form small yellow balls and slender Armenian cucumbers that can grow 2 feet long.

Cucumbers grow as vines or bushes. Growing vining cucumbers up a trellis lets the fruits hang down to grow unimpeded, free of dirt and easy to pick.

TO GROW Cucumbers like lots of water and sun, and they don't mind heat. Vining varieties need space—a single plant may take up 20 square feet or more. Bush cucumbers are more compact and can be grown in rows. Plant in late spring to ensure a good start. Plant two or three seeds together, 1 inch deep and 10 inches apart. If you prefer to let your cukes grow on the ground, sow seeds in small mounds of dirt spaced 5 feet apart. Water regularly at the base of the plants and avoid sprinkling, which can encourage diseases. A good layer of mulch helps conserve water and suppress weeds.

TO HARVEST Start taking slicing cucumbers when they are 6 to 8 inches long (about 20 inches for long varieties) and picklers when they're 4 to 5 inches long. Pick cukes while relatively young—older cucumbers can turn bitter and have lots of seeds. Frequent picking encourages new fruits.

PESTS Aphids, cucumber beetles, flea beetles, mites and squash vine borers have a fondness for cucumbers. Protect young plants under row covers. Squash vine borers attack roots and cause the plants to collapse. If you suspect borers, try applying parasitic nematodes to the soil.

BEST ZONES 4→11 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Eggplants

Pretty in purple, eggplant has lots of nutrients and healthy doses of dietary fiber.

With their bulbous shapes and rich, purplish colors, eggplants are a fun addition to the edible garden. However, they can be a bit tricky to grow. They like near-tropical conditions, which means plenty of water, sunlight and heat. They don't like cold weather, so you don't want to start them too early in the spring. They grow best when nighttime temps are above 60°F.

Plan on tying the plants to stakes to help support them and their heavy fruit. Varieties include long, skinny Japanese eggplants and smallish types of various colors including white, yellow, red and green.

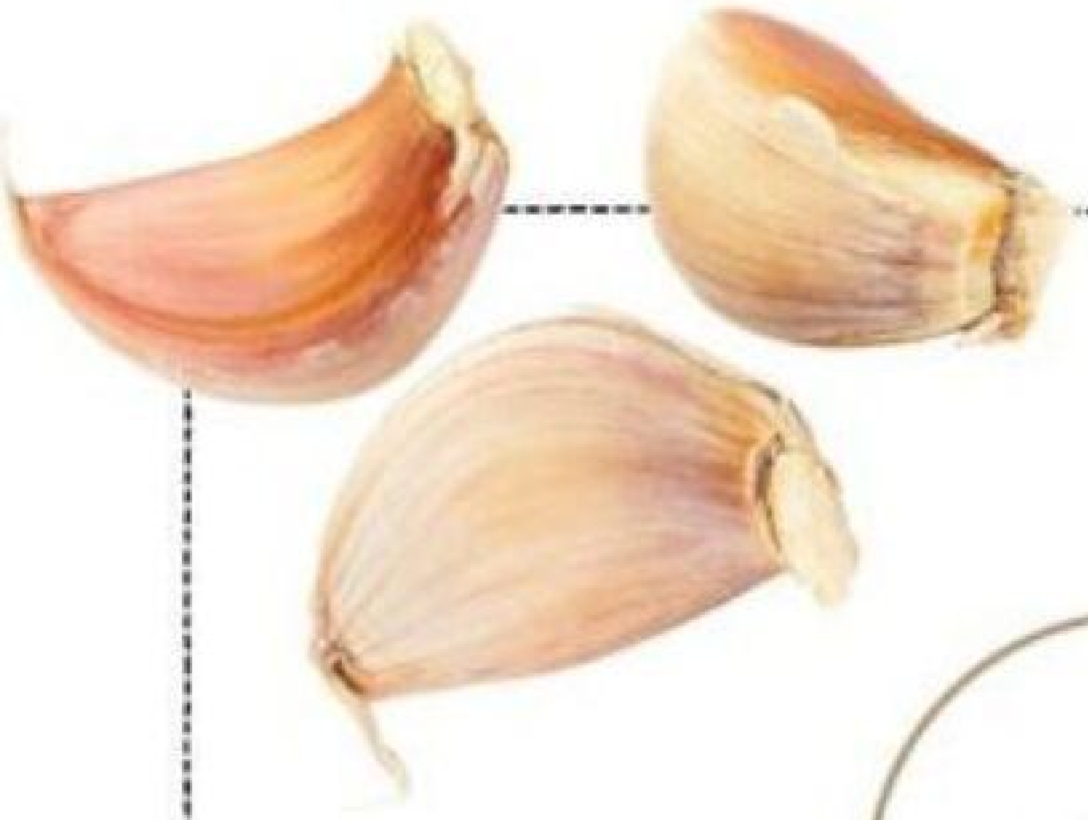
DID YOU KNOW?
In medieval times, eggplants were thought to be poisonous and to cause insanity.

TO GROW Give eggplants a good start by planting seeds indoors two months before the last frost. Otherwise, buy seedlings at a nursery. Set out young plants 2 feet apart in rows that are 3 feet apart. Keep well-watered and mulch around plants to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. Add stakes or tomato cages to support the plants as they mature.

TO HARVEST Take eggplants when the fruits are firm and the skins are shiny. If the skins start to turn dull, the fruit will be bitter.

PESTS Aphids, Colorado potato beetles, cutworms and whiteflies like eggplants. Pick off pests or knock them off with a stream of water from a hose. Protect young plants with row covers.

BEST ZONES 4→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞



Garlic

Garlic is famous for its intense flavor, and for centuries it has been used in many home remedies.

This staple of the edible garden is easy to grow and an essential ingredient in many dishes. There are many varieties–ask your local nursery or state extension service which do best in your climate.

You can try to grow garlic from the bulbs you buy at your local market. Break up bulbs into cloves and look for cloves that are starting to sprout a bit of root–those will be the prime candidates for planting.

Like most root and bulb-type veggies, garlic likes loose, loamy soil that's well-drained and free from stones and old roots.

TO GROW Garlic can overwinter in mild climates, so plan on planting in the fall and harvesting the following summer. In colder climates, you'll want to set out cloves in early spring, a couple of weeks before the last frost is scheduled.

Plant cloves 1 inch deep and 3 inches apart in rows spaced 1 foot apart. Set the cloves with the pointed end up. Water regularly but not excessively.

TO HARVEST When the leafy tops begin to wilt, it's time to harvest garlic. Don't pull up the plant; rather, ease the plants out of the ground with a garden fork. Tie bulbs together and air-dry them in a cool, dark place.

PESTS The strong scent and flavor is too much for most pests and they stay away. In fact, garlic can be planted as a natural repellent to protect other vegetable crops.

QUICK & EASY

40-CLOVE GARLIC CHICKEN

- **3 lbs. chicken thighs & drumsticks**
- **Salt and pepper to taste**
- **½ cup + 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **5 sprigs fresh thyme**
- **5 sprigs fresh rosemary**
- **40 cloves garlic, peeled**
- **Slices of your favorite bread**

1. Season chicken with salt and pepper; coat pieces evenly with 2 tbsp. olive oil. Heat butter in oven-safe pan (a cast-iron pan works well) until melted, then add 3 sprigs each of thyme and rosemary. Put chicken in pan, skin-side down, and cook 5 to 7 minutes until nicely browned. **2.** Preheat oven to 350°. **3.** Turn chicken browned side up. Add remaining oil, herbs and garlic cloves to the pan. Cover the pan, place in the oven and bake for 90 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and let the chicken rest, covered, for another 15 minutes. **4.** Serve chicken with pan juices, garlic cloves and bread. Mash and spread the softened garlic onto the bread like butter, and dip the bread into the pan juices to sop up the delicious flavors.

—Recipe by Karen Bilon Riha

BEST ZONES 4→12 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞

Herbs

Herbs add zest to all kinds of foods and delightful aromas to your kitchen. When you grow your own herbs, you're twice rewarded. Snip fresh herbs right from your garden for full, unmatched flavors and cut, dry and store them for year-round use. You'll also save money—store-bought herbs tend to be expensive. Make sure your planting beds have plenty of sun and well-drained soil that's been fertilized before adding the plants.

ANNUAL

Basil

Basil is one of the most popular culinary herbs, with a mild yet aromatic flavor. There are more than two dozen types of basil, but the deep-green variety called sweet basil is the most commonly used culinary type and is a key ingredient in Italian tomato sauces and pesto. Asian or Thai basil has a stronger flavor and is used in soups and curries. Purple basil is more of an ornamental plant that you can use for a burst of color throughout the garden.

TO GROW Sow seeds in late spring to early summer. Place seeds half an inch deep and 2 to 3 inches part. Thin seedlings to 1 foot apart. Snip off flowers to keep your plants producing leaves throughout the summer. Just a half-dozen plants will provide plenty of basil.

EVERGREEN SHRUB OR TREE

Bay

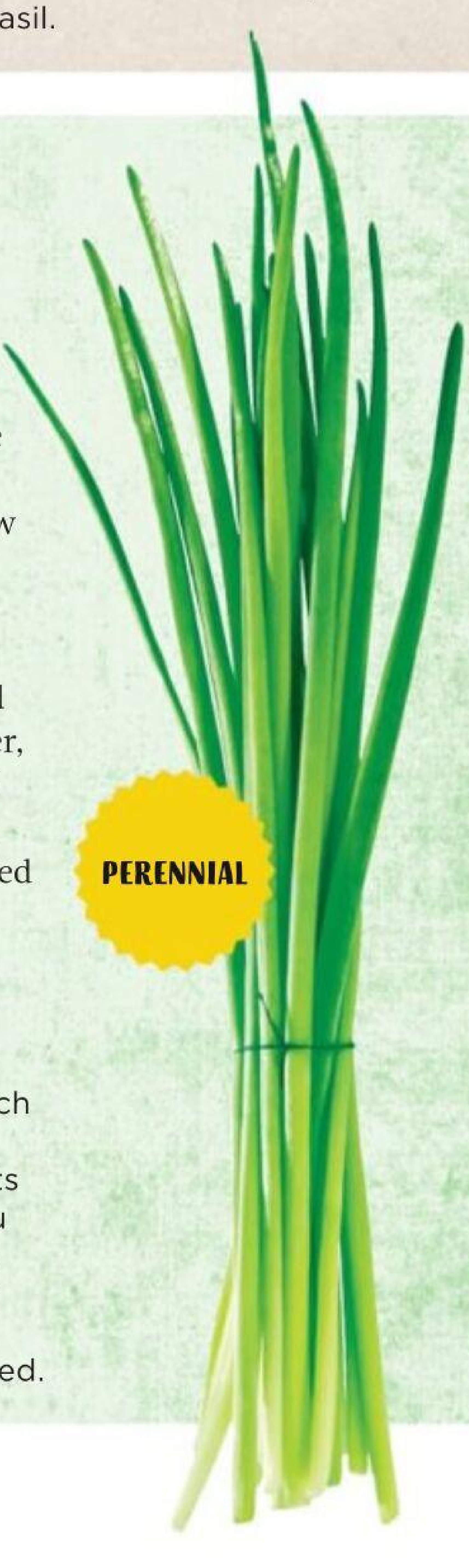
Heady, fragrant bay is a favorite flavoring for stews, soups, slow-cooker recipes and Italian cuisine. The large, oblong leaves usually are added whole to the pot or pan, then removed after cooking. It's a hardy, slow-growing shrub that has the potential to become a full-size tree 30 to 40 feet tall. You can keep it more compact with frequent pruning.

TO GROW Bay prefers a mild, Mediterranean climate. It's tolerant of various soil conditions but it needs good drainage. It can stand full sun or partial shade. Get young plants from a nursery and plant them where their dense, evergreen foliage fits your overall garden scheme.

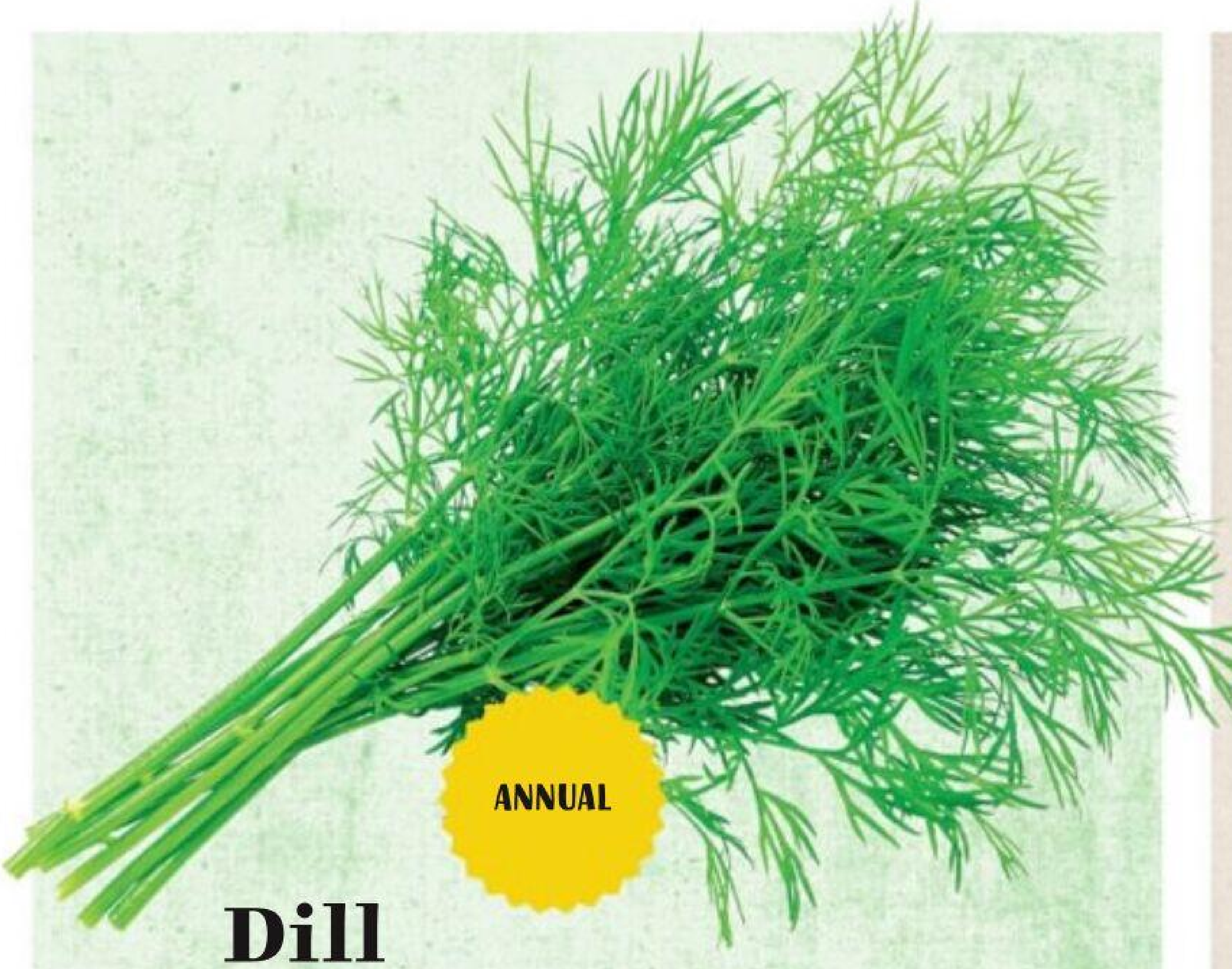
Chives

Chives have a onion-like flavor but without the pungent taste. They grow as slender stalks that are perfect for snipping into small pieces and sprinkling on salads and omelets. In early summer, they produce clusters of small, purplish flowers. Chinese chives, also called garlic chives, have the flavor of fresh garlic.

TO GROW Sow seeds in spring or fall, half an inch deep in rows 12 inches apart. Thin young plants to 6 inches apart. If you get chives at a nursery, set out the seedlings in early spring after the threat of frost has passed.



PERENNIAL



ANNUAL

Dill

The lacy leaves, or fronds, of the dill plant give a distinct, savory flavor to seafood and soups. Add fresh dill to a cucumber and cream cheese sandwich for a classic summertime treat, and sprinkle it on baked potatoes with sour cream for a hearty side. Dried dill keeps for months without losing its flavor.

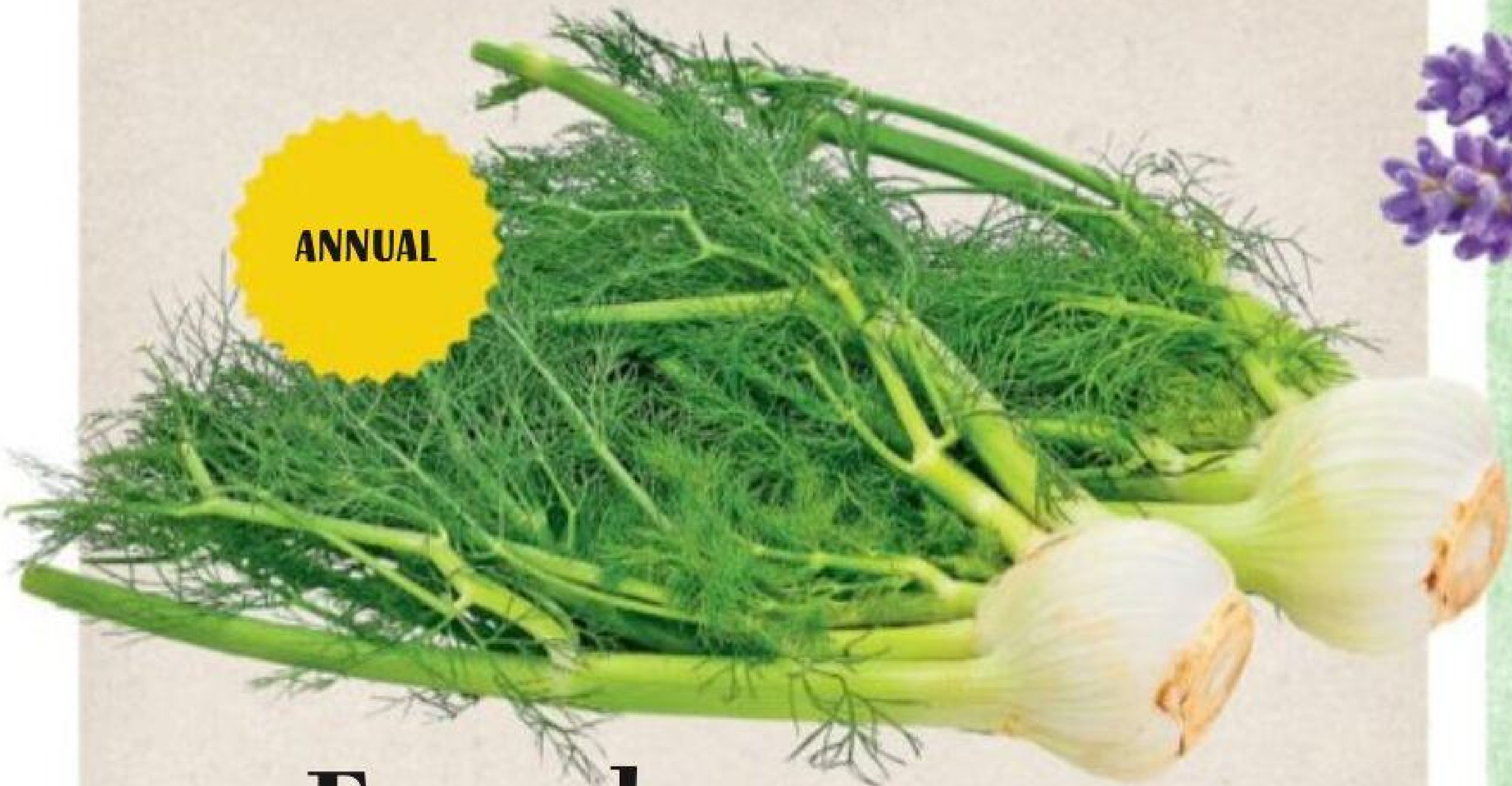
TO GROW Sow seeds in early spring, a quarter inch deep in rows 10 inches apart. Thin seedlings to about 10 inches apart.

ANNUAL

Cilantro

Cilantro, also called coriander, is a favorite addition to Mexican and Asian dishes. It has a fresh, bright taste. Add cilantro as a finishing garnish–cooking the herb diminishes its flavor. If you let your cilantro plants go to flower, you can save the seeds and grind them into powder to use as needed in a variety of dishes, or plant the seeds the following year for more of this tasty herb.

TO GROW Sow seeds in spring after the threat of frost has passed, setting seeds about a quarter inch deep. As the plant matures, pick leaves as you need them. Dried cilantro leaves quickly lose their special flavor.



ANNUAL

Fennel

Fennel is a combo herb and vegetable with a mild, licorice-like flavor. Plain fennel grows 4 to 6 feet tall and produces seeds and lacy foliage that are used for herbal seasonings. Bulb-type fennel is known as Florence fennel and finocchio. Both types are a tasty addition to salads, soups, fish and slow-cooked meats.

TO GROW Plant seeds of plain fennel half an inch deep in moist soil. It's a good idea to soak the seeds a day before planting. Sow seeds every inch, then thin the plants to 1 foot apart. Fennel grows very tall—you might want to locate it in a sunny spot in the back of your garden. Take foliage as needed for recipes. When the flowers turn brown, clip the seed heads into a bag.

PERENNIAL EVERGREEN SHRUB

Lavender

Lavender is best known for its sweet fragrance, and the natural oils of lavender are found in soaps, shampoos and potpourris. But the variety known as English lavender is also a wonderful addition to salads, baked goods and rubs for barbecued meats. Top ice cream with English lavender for the sweet taste of summer. Lavender plants are a natural deterrent for mosquitoes and other garden pests, and you can mix the plants among other edibles and flowers. The bright purple flowers are long-lasting.

TO GROW Grow from seed indoors, then transplant outdoors in mid-spring. Lavender doesn't like too much moisture, so water infrequently. Fertilizer isn't necessary, and in temperate climates, this hardy shrub will continue to produce leaves and flowers for years. Dried lavender stays pungent for more than a year.

Oregano

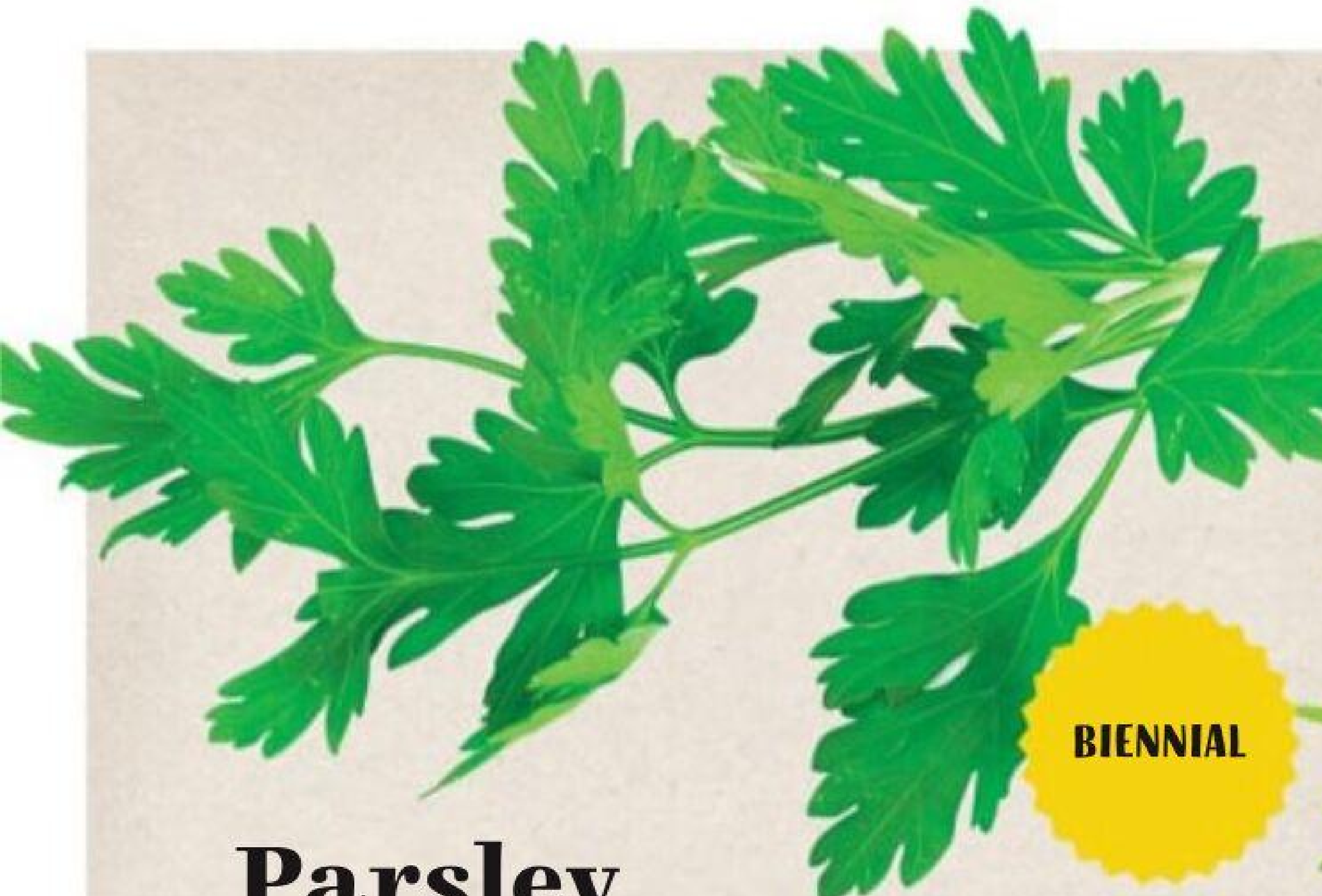
Oregano, also know as marjoram, is another herb closely associated with Italian and Mexican cuisines. Dried oregano keeps its flavor well, so plan on picking and drying the leaves for future use. It's a low-growing plant with white or purple flowers and makes a good ground cover. Plant it among stepping stones and you'll smell it as you crush bits of leaves underfoot.

TO GROW This is a sun-loving herb, so give it plenty of exposure. Plant seeds in well-drained soil a couple of weeks after the last frost, when the soil is nice and warm. Sow seeds half an inch deep in rows spaced 18 inches apart.

Mint

Often associated with sweets such as ice cream and candy, mint lends its cool, tangy flavor to savory dishes from the Middle East. It's also prized as a flavorful tea that has a calming effect on tummies. Add fresh mint to salads for a bright burst of flavor. Mint jelly is a classic pairing with lamb dishes. There are several varieties of mint, such as spearmint, peppermint and lemon mint.

TO GROW Hardy and tolerant of neglect, mint is easy to grow. But be careful—mint is a notorious spreader and can start popping up in places you didn't expect. Keep your mint plantings to a minimum—one or two plants is fine—or plant it in containers to keep it under control. In autumn or spring, plant mint 2 inches deep. Water well to start, then give it occasional waterings.



Parsley

One of the more commonly used herbs, parsley finds its way into sauces, salads, soups and omelets. Curly parsley often is used as a sprightly green garnish on all types of food. It has a peppery tang that works well with other spices and flavors. Grow flat-leaf or Italian parsley for cooking and curly parsley to use as a garnish.

TO GROW Give slow-growing parsley a head start by planting seeds indoors 10 weeks before the last frost. Put plants in moist soil about 6 inches apart, or plant seeds directly in garden soil half an inch deep and spaced 2 to 3 inches apart. Thin young seedlings to 6 inches apart. It's a compact plant and perfect for growing indoors in small pots on a windowsill for year-round use.

PERENNIAL
EVERGREEN
SHRUB

Rosemary

Pungent rosemary can be used fresh or dried to give a heady flavor to soups, meats, baked goods and sauces. It grows as a tough, woody plant that survives well in moderate climates. You'll want to snip the growing tips often to ensure a constant supply of tender fronds.

TO GROW Sow seeds indoors two months before the last frost. Arrange the seedlings carefully in your garden—once established, rosemary grows into a large shrub that can be 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide. Prune regularly so the branches don't get too leggy.

PERENNIAL SHRUB

Tarragon

Use the anise-flavored leaves of French tarragon in soups, salads, omelets and cheese appetizers. Tarragon added to melted butter is an excellent garnish for fish, steak and vegetables. It's also good for flavoring vinegar. Russian tarragon, a relative, is much less flavorful.

TO GROW You can't grow tarragon from seeds. Instead, you'll have to buy starter plants from a nursery or take cuttings from another garden. Put the young plants or rooted cuttings in good soil spaced 2 to 3 feet apart and water regularly. A full-grown tarragon plant is 2 feet tall and nearly as wide.

PERENNIAL SHRUB

Sage

Flavorful sage takes center stage each year as a key ingredient in Thanksgiving turkey stuffing, but it's delicious in stews, casseroles and sauces all year. The taste can be strong, so you'll want to experiment with it to find the right level for your palate. The plant has soft green leaves and beautiful blue flowering spikes that appear in early summer.

TO GROW Plant seeds 2 feet apart in well-drained soil two weeks before the last frost. Make sure to water young plants frequently. To maintain good quality, plan to replace your sage plants every three to four years.

PERENNIAL SHRUB

Thyme

Thyme is one of the most useful kitchen herbs and can be used to add flavor to almost any dish. It's a small spreading shrub featuring light-green leaves with cream-colored edges and small pink flowers in spring. There are many varieties of thyme; ask your local nursery or garden club which ones work best in your area.

TO GROW It can be difficult to grow thyme from seeds, so getting seedlings from a local nursery is best. Put out the seedlings two weeks before the last frost and space them 10 to 12 inches apart. If you're going to try and grow directly from seed, sow the seeds indoors about 10 weeks before the last frost.

HERBAL FOLKLORE

Herbs have a colorful history as homespun curatives and palliatives

Rosemary tea improves memory.

Tarragon in your boots gives you strength for hiking.

A sprig of **basil** placed under a stone will turn into a scorpion.

Ancient Romans wore garlands of **parsley** during feasts to prevent intoxication.

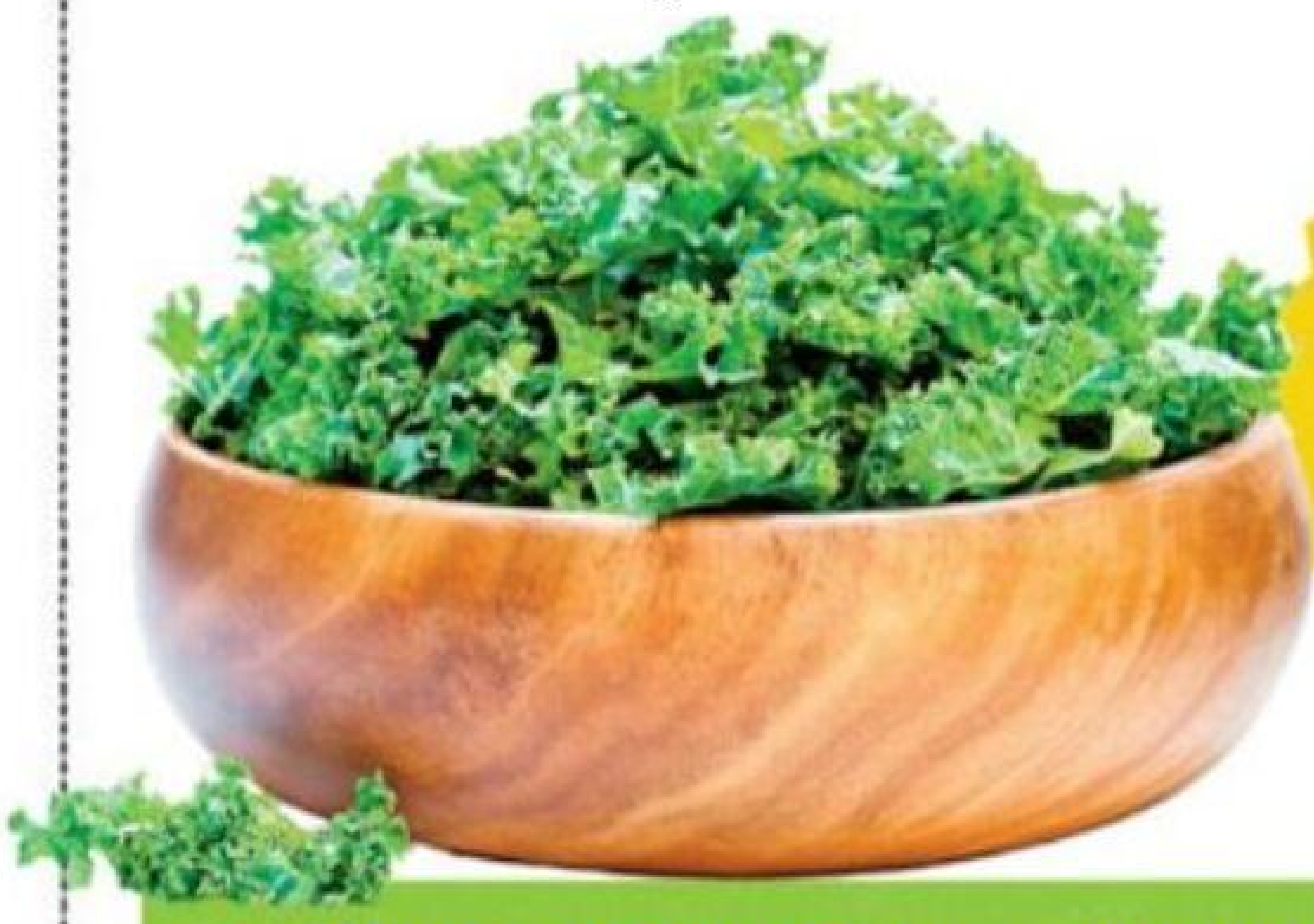
The ancient Chinese thought eating **coriander seeds** gave immortality.

Rubbing **lavender oil** on aching joints helps ease arthritis.

Kale

A tasty kale salad supplies all your daily needs for vitamins A, C and K.

Crunchy kale is a cool-season veggie that's a member of the cabbage family. It's easy to grow and resists pests and diseases. Although it has a pungent taste, it's especially rich in vitamins and minerals and is good mixed in a summer salad or added to a stir-fry. Grow it starting in early spring or late summer–cooler weather helps it taste less bitter.



MORE KALE! Add more nutritious kale to your family's diet by slipping chopped kale into casseroles, omelets and pesto.

TO GROW Sow seeds a quarter-inch deep and 1 inch apart in rows spaced 2 feet apart. When the young plants are 3 to 4 inches tall, thin them so they are spaced about 1 foot apart. Water well during the growing season. Kale matures in about three months.

TO HARVEST Take the outer leaves as the plant grows, then pull up the entire plant when the growing season is over. Kale leaves will taste sweeter if you let your late-season crop stand through a frost.

PESTS Keep an eye out for aphids and cabbage worms, but kale is resistant to most pests.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞

Leeks

Prized by chefs, leeks are cold-tolerant and easy for first-time gardeners to grow.

Leeks are members of the onion family and have a similar but milder, more delicate flavor. They're very high in vitamin K. The plant has a small whitish bulb and foot-long stalks made up of tightly wrapped leaves. For cooking, you'll want to discard the tough outer leaves and use only the bulb and the inner stalk for soups, salads and stir-fries.

Leeks are slow-growing and can take six to seven months to reach maturity. Cold-tolerant varieties will overwinter for a spring crop.

TO GROW To jump-start your leek crop, buy starter plants from a nursery. Set out young plants in early spring in mild climates, but make sure to wait until fall if your early summer weather can get hot. Dig furrows 6 inches deep and space plants 4 inches apart in a partially sunny location. Water well. As the plants begin to grow, gently fill in the furrows to cover and blanch the base so the bulbs and lower stalks stay tender.

TO HARVEST Take leeks when the stems are at least half an inch thick but no more than 1½ inches in diameter. Don't pull up the plants; instead, lift them out with a garden fork.

PESTS Thrips may be bothersome, but most pests leave leeks alone. You should protect young leeks with row covers.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞

Lettuce

With its varieties of colors and textures, lettuce is the heart and soul of any salad.

Lettuce is the essential garden vegetable, the basis of nearly every great summer salad. Just-picked lettuce has a better taste and much higher vitamin content than store-bought lettuce, too. There are many varieties of lettuce, from good old iceberg to more exotic forms such as radicchio and endive. Over several seasons you might want to experiment with different varieties to see what you like best.

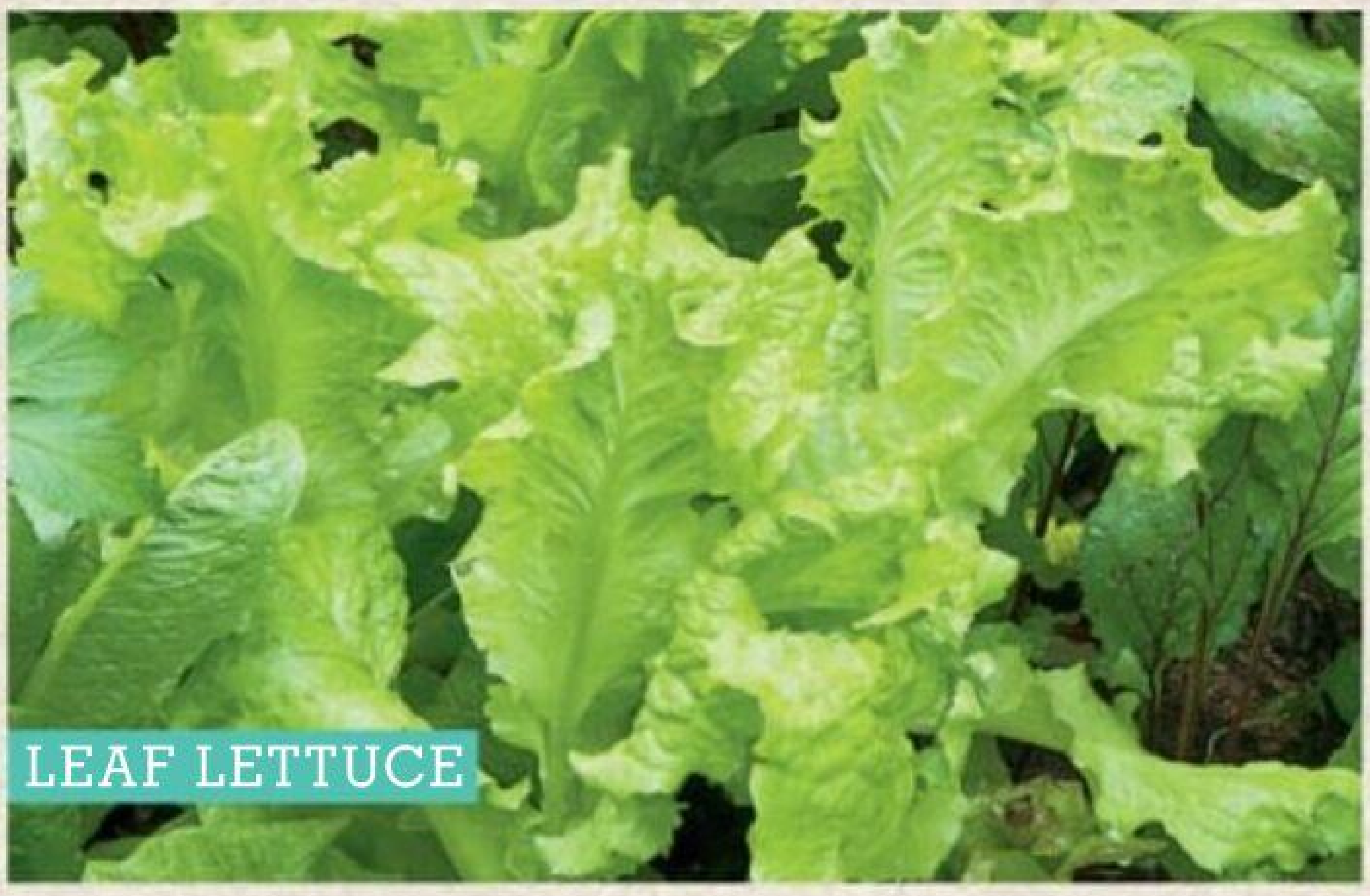
Lettuce is not difficult to grow, but it likes cool weather and locations that are bright but not too sunny. It grows fast, so plant a few small crops a couple of weeks apart to have a continual supply of fresh lettuce.

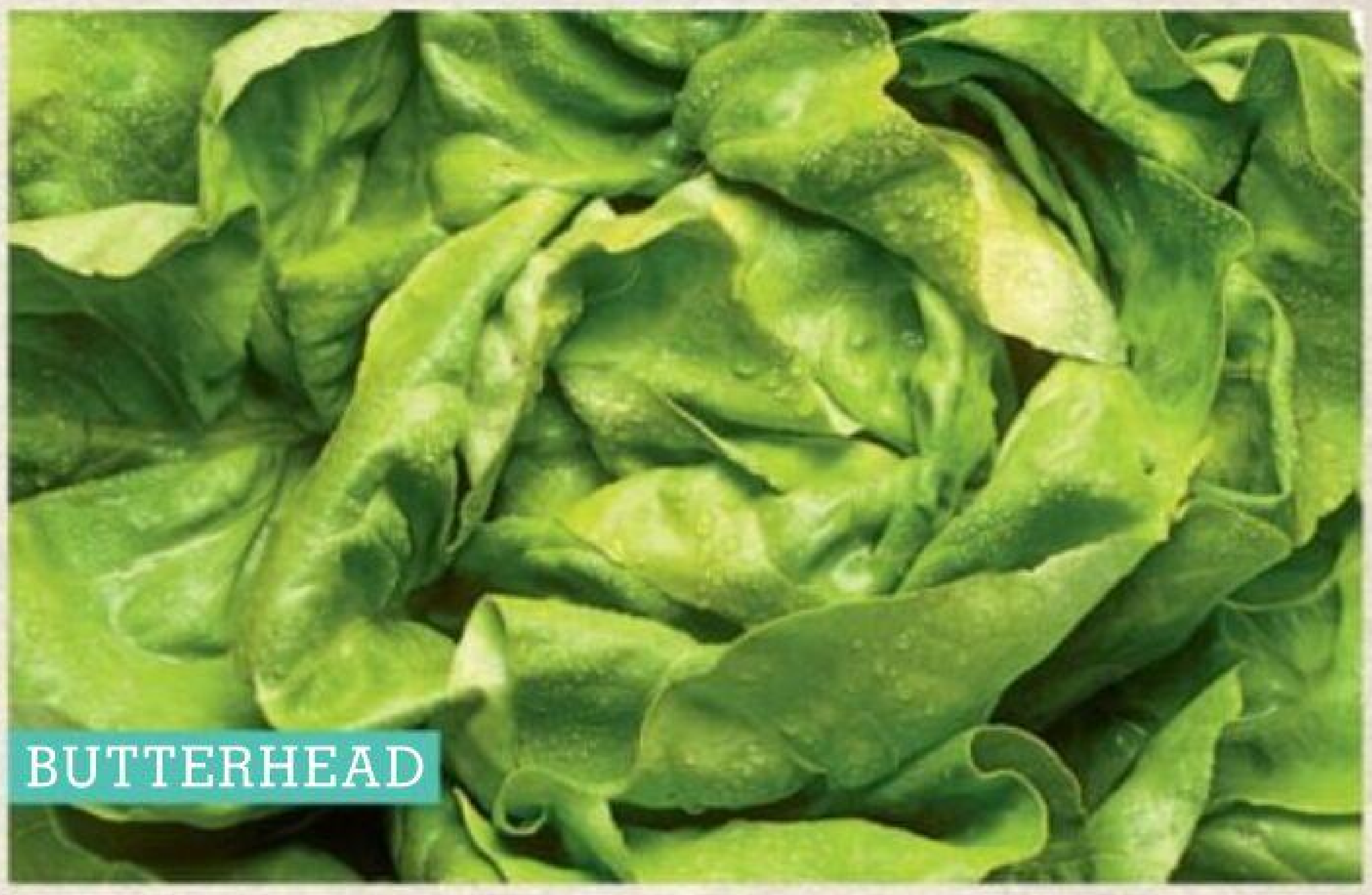
TO GROW Plant seeds in early spring in a location that's not too sunny. Sow seeds a quarter-inch deep and 1 inch apart in rows spaced 2 feet apart. Sprinkle the rows lightly with water until the plants appear, then keep the soil moist as the plants mature. Letting the soil dry out too much makes the lettuce taste bitter. Thin young plants so they are 6 to 8 inches apart. Try a late-season crop by planting in early fall, when the hot weather has passed.

TO HARVEST You can take the outer leaves of heads and leave the rest of the plant to grow, which is a good way to pick what you need for an evening meal without harvesting too much at once. Or take the entire plant, cutting off the head just above the soil.

PESTS Slugs and snails are especially fond of lettuce crops, and earwigs like to hide in the leaves. Trap these pests by setting rolled-up newspapers in your garden—the earwigs and slugs crawl inside to hide. Beer poured in shallow bowls attracts slugs; earwigs can be lured by vegetable oils and wheat germ.

BEST ZONES 4→9 **SUNLIGHT** ●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞


LEAF LETTUCE


BUTTERHEAD

Favorite Lettuce Varieties

LEAF LETTUCE grows as a bunch of leaves rather than a tightly packed head. The leaves of leaf lettuce may be crinkled, puckered and frilly. It also comes in many colors, from pale green to purple, red and gold.

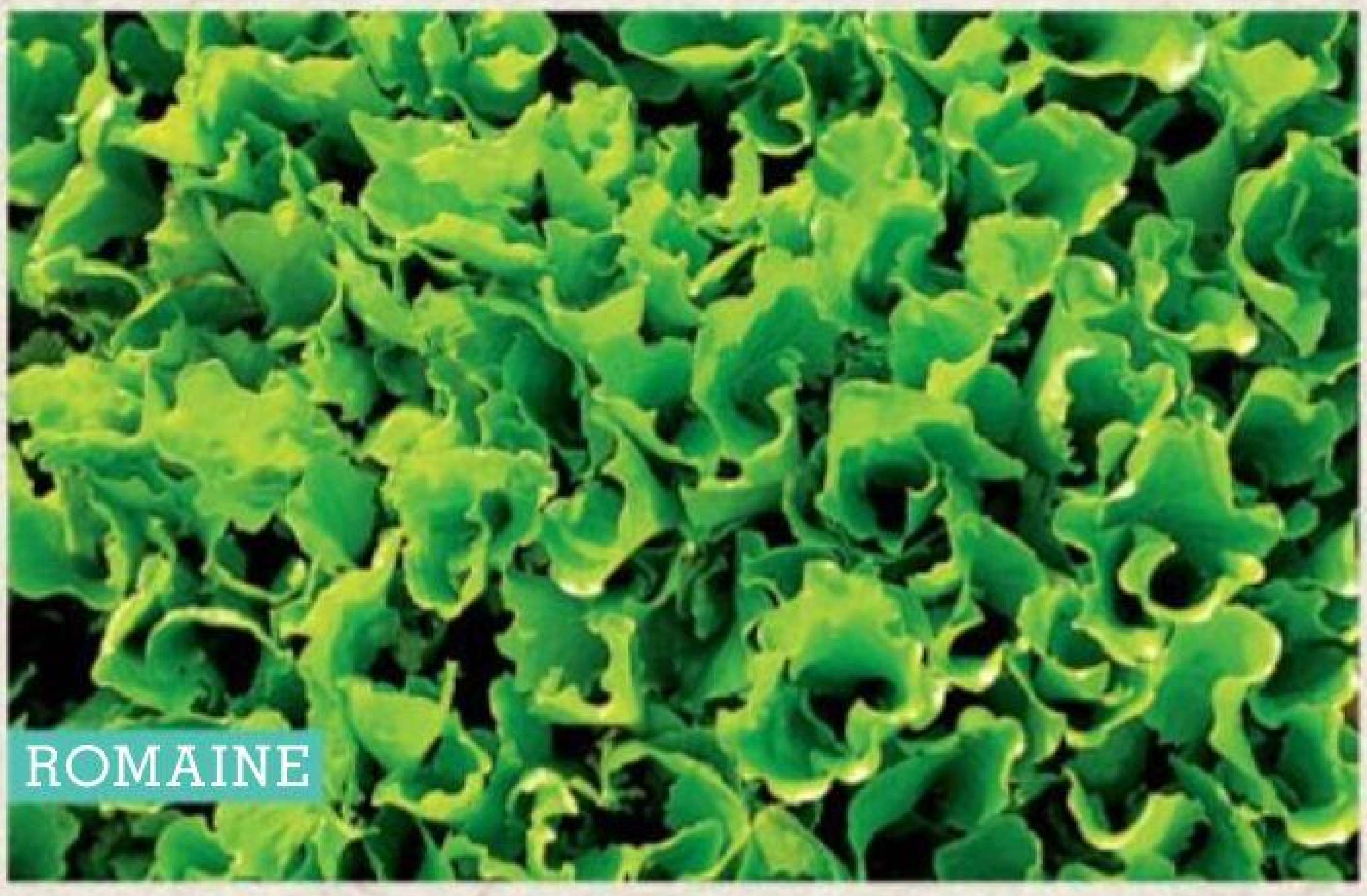
BUTTERHEAD features small, tender, tightly packed leaves. Well-known Bibb lettuce is a butterhead variety. The mature plant is small and is a good choice for compact garden spaces.

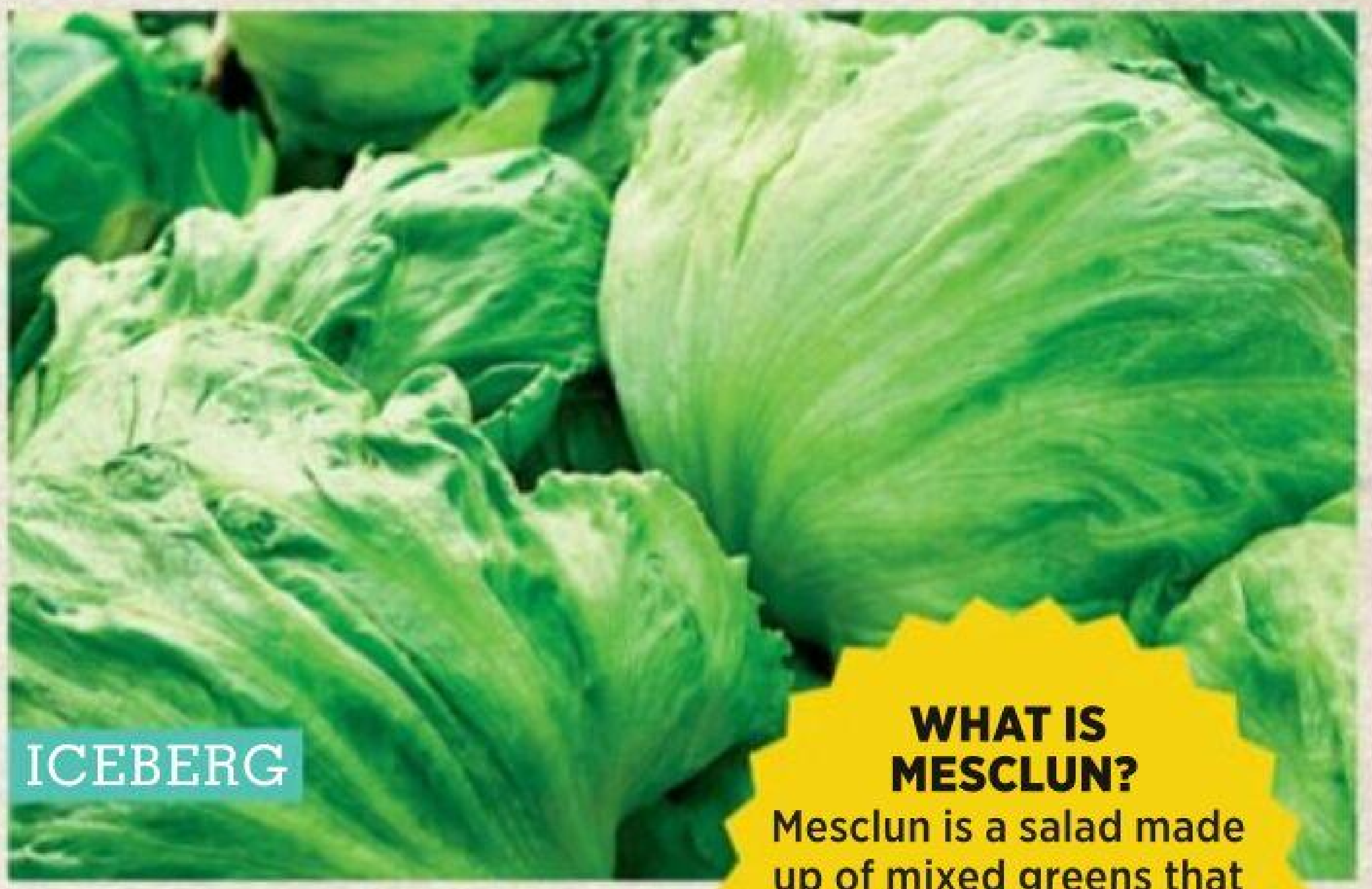
ROMAINE has big leaves with thick, crisp central veins. Romaine is used in Caesar salads; try grilling entire heads for a summery treat. Romaine takes about two and a half months to mature, so start plants indoors a month before the last frost.

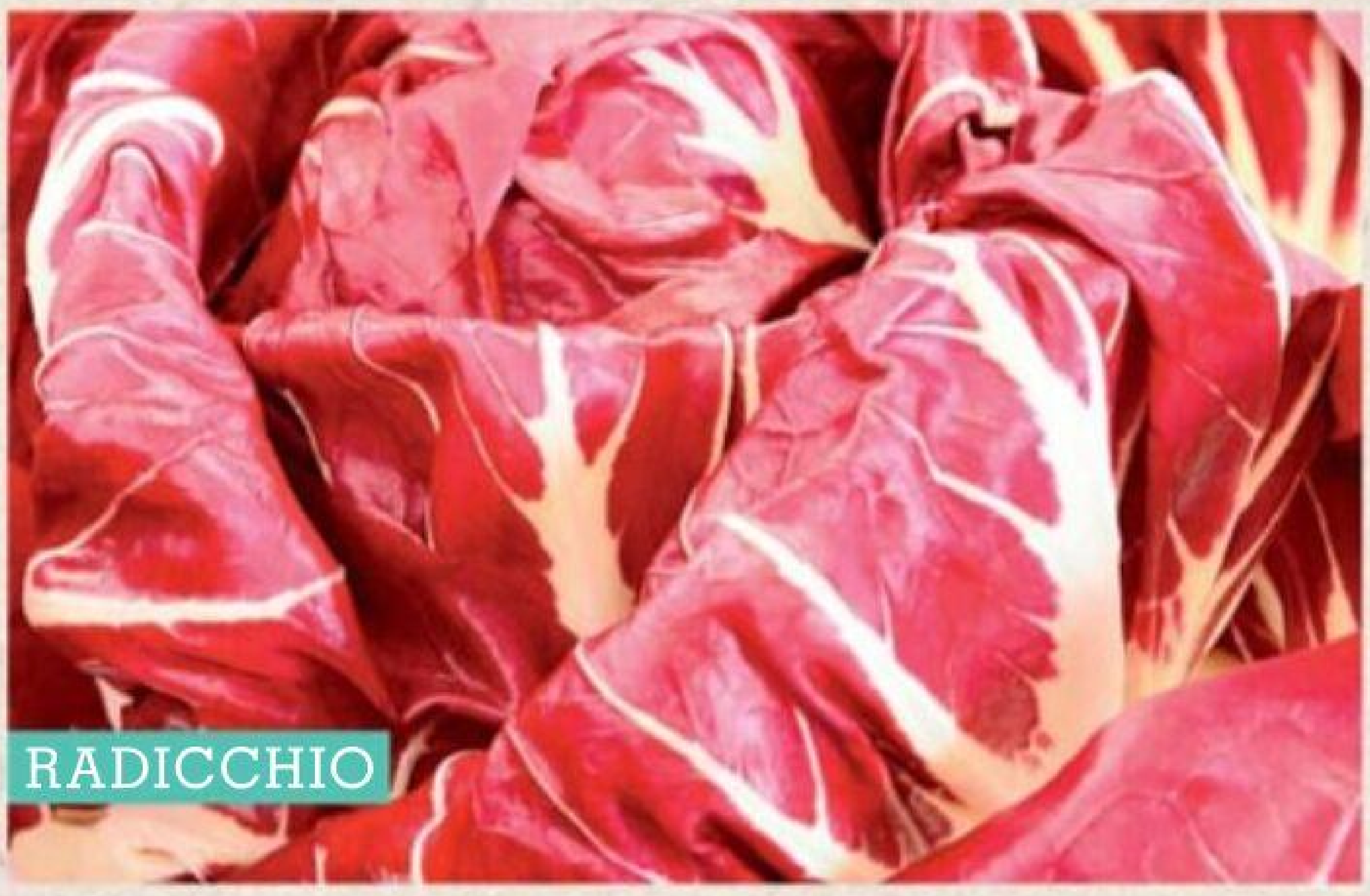
ICEBERG lettuce is the familiar grocery store variety. It takes up to three months to mature. To ensure your crop doesn't fade in hot weather, look for the variety called 'Batavian,' which matures quickly and is somewhat heat-tolerant.

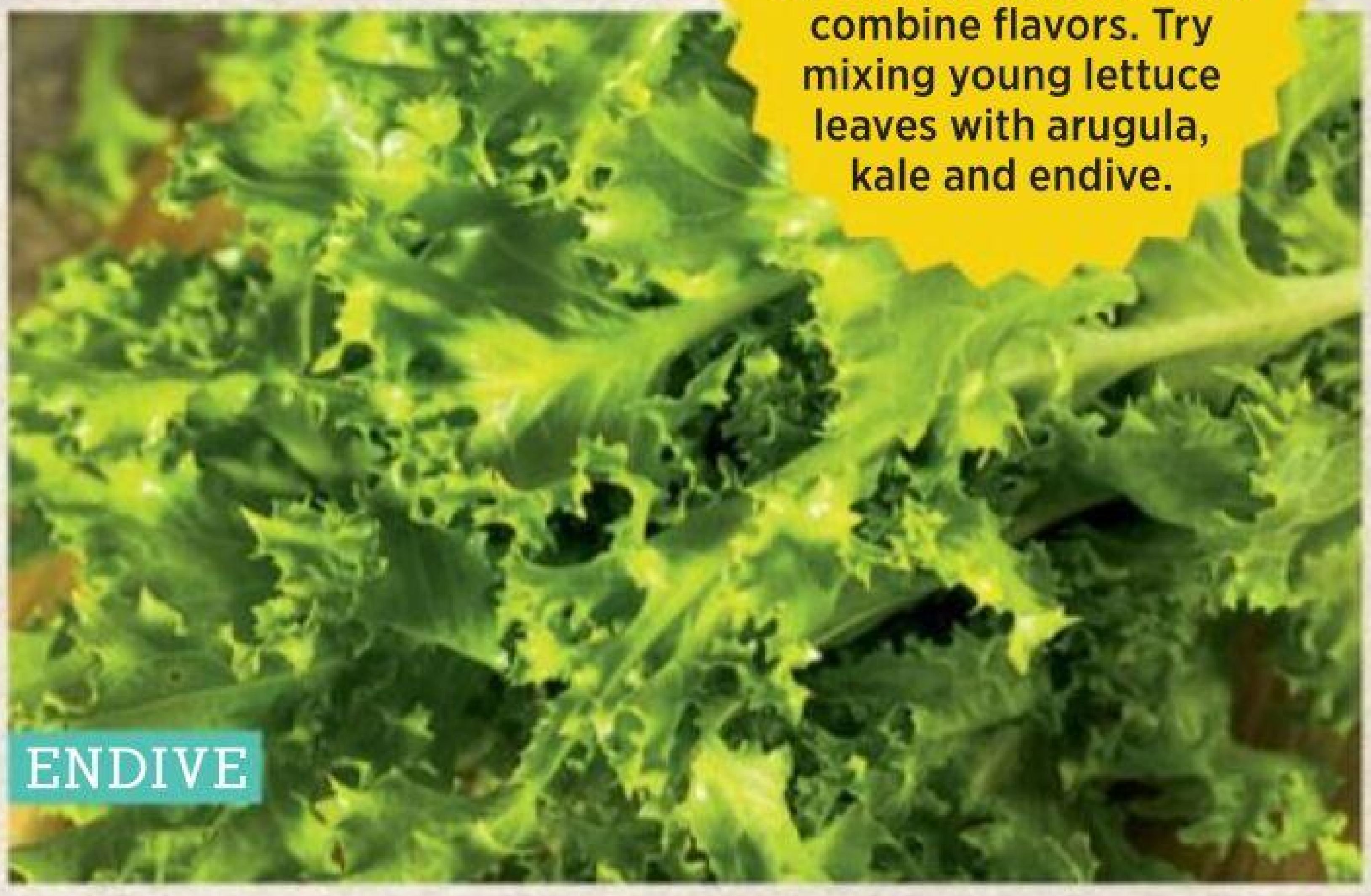
RADICCHIO produces beautiful, deep-red heads striped with white veins. It's not a true lettuce but a form of chicory. It's a striking addition to a salad, but you'll need to pair radicchio with sweeter greens to balance its bitter taste.

ENDIVE has lacy leaves that sprawl from its center. It takes some hot weather, but too much makes it taste bitter. For milder flavor, tie the outer leaves together over the plant three weeks before harvest to protect the inner leaves from sunlight.


ROMAINE


ICEBERG


RADICCHIO


ENDIVE

WHAT IS MESCLUN?
Mesclun is a salad made up of mixed greens that combine flavors. Try mixing young lettuce leaves with arugula, kale and endive.

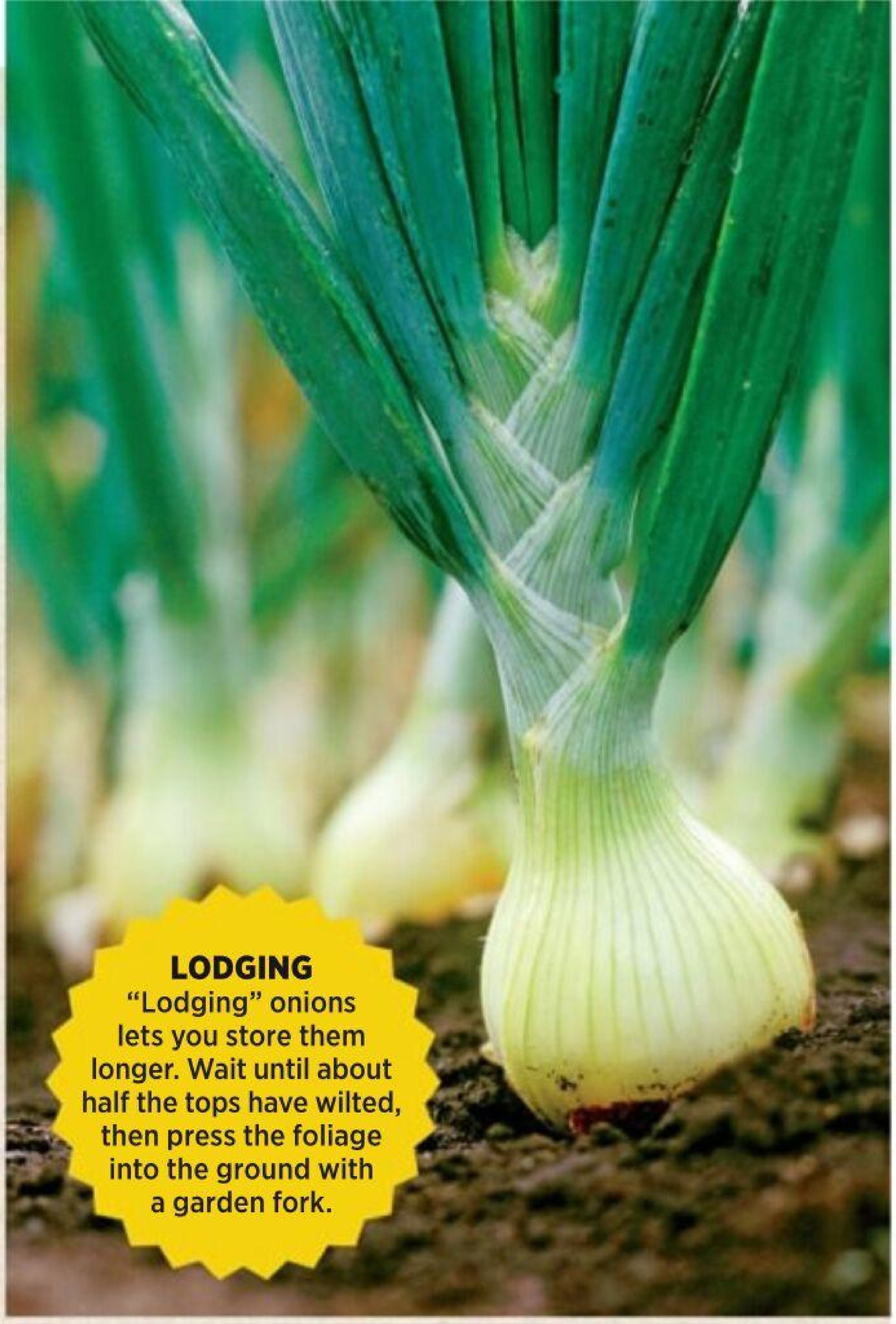
Onions

One of the all-time most popular vegetables, onions are a key ingredient in cuisines all over the world.

Onions are a versatile ingredient in so many dishes and types of food–they can be eaten raw in salads and sandwiches, added to slow-cooker recipes and caramelized to creamy sweetness for omelets and burger toppings. There are many types of onions, but all have that familiar, sharp flavor. Young onions are called scallions or green onions. As they mature, they develop the tightly wrapped bulbs of yellow, red and white onions.

Onions can be grown from seeds, nursery starts and sets, which are small, immature onion bulbs. Growing from sets is the most reliable way to grow onions.

Onions are a cool-season plant that can tolerate some frost. Like many bulb-type vegetables, they like loose, loamy soil that's free of stones, roots and other obstructions. They don't take up much space, and you can get a good crop from a small garden.



LODGING
"Lodging" onions lets you store them longer. Wait until about half the tops have wilted, then press the foliage into the ground with a garden fork.

TO GROW Plant seeds half an inch deep in well-tilled soil. Space seeds half an inch apart in rows 18 inches apart. As seedlings appear, thin them to 1 inch apart if you plan to harvest scallions, 4 inches apart if you want to grow bulbs. Planting sets? Put the bulbs 2 inches apart and about 1 inch deep, pointed ends up. Keep well-watered and free of weeds. Feed every three weeks with a nitrogen-rich fertilizer.

TO HARVEST Pull scallions as soon as they are pencil thickness or a little larger. Take bulbs when their leaves begin to droop and turn yellow, digging up the onions with a garden fork. Let your onions rest and dry after harvesting by arranging them on several layers of newspaper in a cool, dry spot. After eight to 10 days, store the onions in brown paper bags in a cool—but not too cold—location.

PESTS Thrips and wireworms can cause trouble for onions. Fend off these pests with insecticidal soap.

BEST ZONES 3→9 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞

Peas

Tasty peas like cool weather, but there are heat-resistant varieties to plant, too.

If you like your peas sweet and crunchy, eat them right off the vine. That's because peas start to change their sugar content to starch the moment they're picked. With peas in your edible garden, you'll be able to harvest these little green delights at the peak of their flavor and nutritional value.

Basic Types of Peas

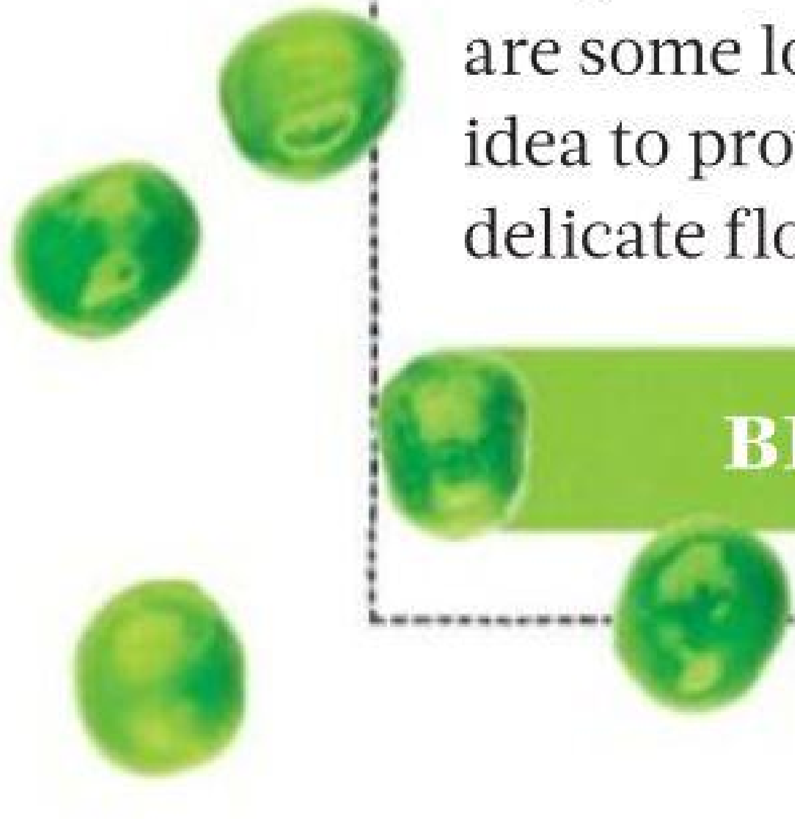
[1]	[2]	[3]
Shelling peas have chubby peas and inedible pods.	Snow or sugar peas have small peas and edible pods.	Snap peas have large peas and edible pods (or you can shell these, too).

Peas are vining plants, so you'll need to add six-foot-tall poles or climbing trellises before planting. There are some low-growing bush varieties, but it's a good idea to provide support for them as well. With their delicate flowers, peas are attractive garden plants.

TO GROW Peas like cool weather, so plant seeds in rich, well-drained soil six weeks before the last frost. Sow the seeds about 1 inch deep and 2 inches apart. Water sparingly—peas aren't fond of too much moisture. Feed a little phosphorous- and potassium-based nutrient mix, but not too much nitrogen.

TO HARVEST Peas are so much fun to harvest, and kids especially get a kick out of picking pods off the vines. However, pea plants are delicate, and care is required to avoid damaging the stems. Pick peas in the morning for the best crispness and flavor. Steady the vine with one hand while you pluck the pod with the other.
Take what you need and harvest often to encourage new growth. If the plants dry out before you get all the peas, you can still harvest the pods and keep the dried peas for soups.

PESTS Aphids and Mexican bean beetles are attracted to peas. Knock aphids off with a gentle stream of water from a garden hose; pick off beetles as you find them.



BEST ZONES 3→11 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞

Peppers

Pick pecks of peppers for plenty of perfect produce—and palate-pleasing flavors.

Few veggies come in so many varied forms and flavors as peppers. They grow short, fat, long, skinny, curved, round and crinkly-skinned. Add to that the colors of the rainbow and flavors ranging from sweet and mild to tongue-stinging hot, and you've got a world of peppers to choose from.

Peppers like warm weather, and, in general, spicier varieties love hotter temps. Peppers grow on sturdy bushes from 1 to 3 feet high, adding eye-catching dollops of color to the garden as the fruits mature. Smaller varieties work well in containers. The many different kinds of peppers available for the home garden all have similar requirements for planting and care.

FIRE IN THE HOLE!

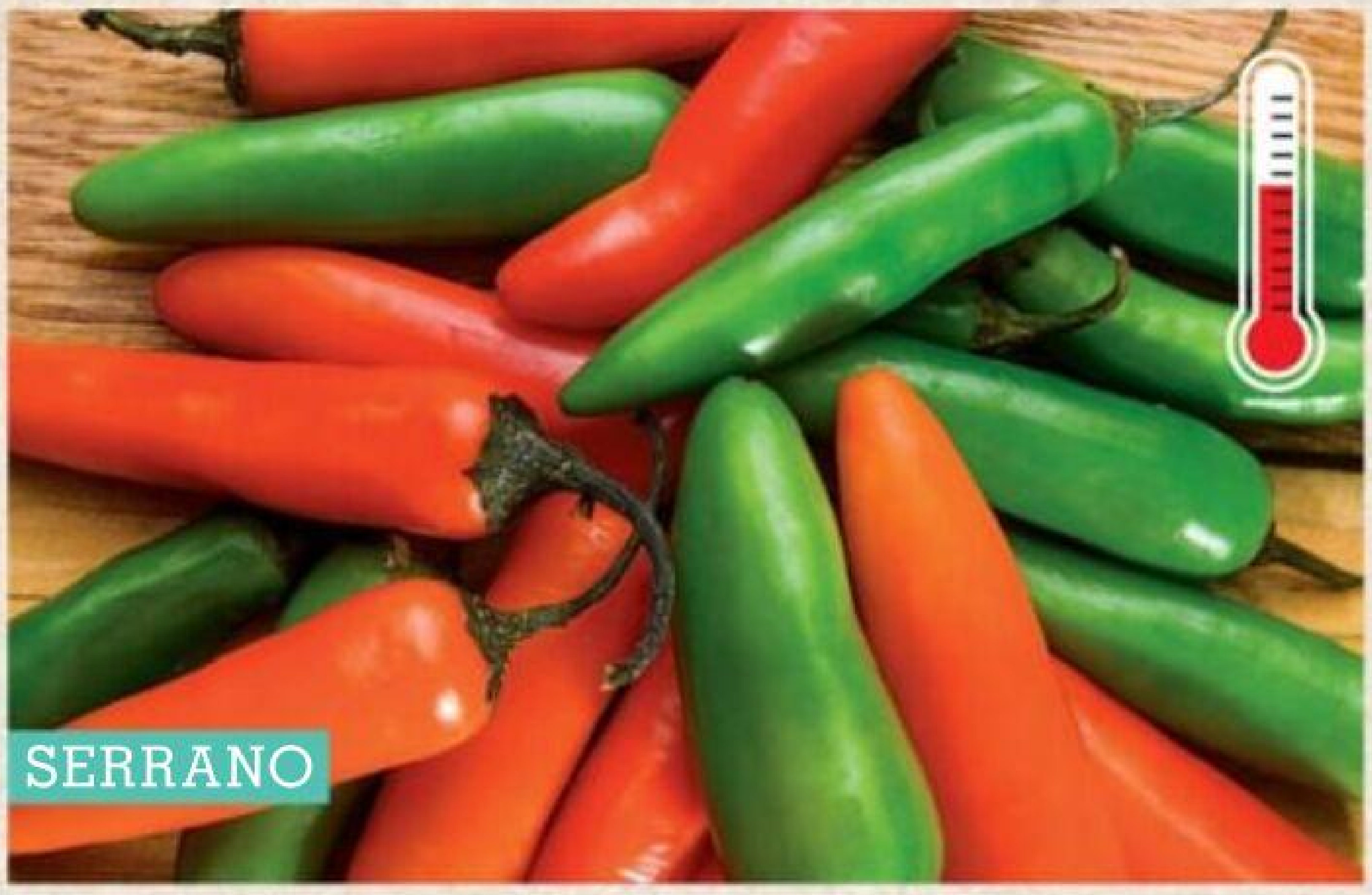
Peppers like sulfur in their soil, so put two or three matchsticks in each planting hole before covering up the roots.

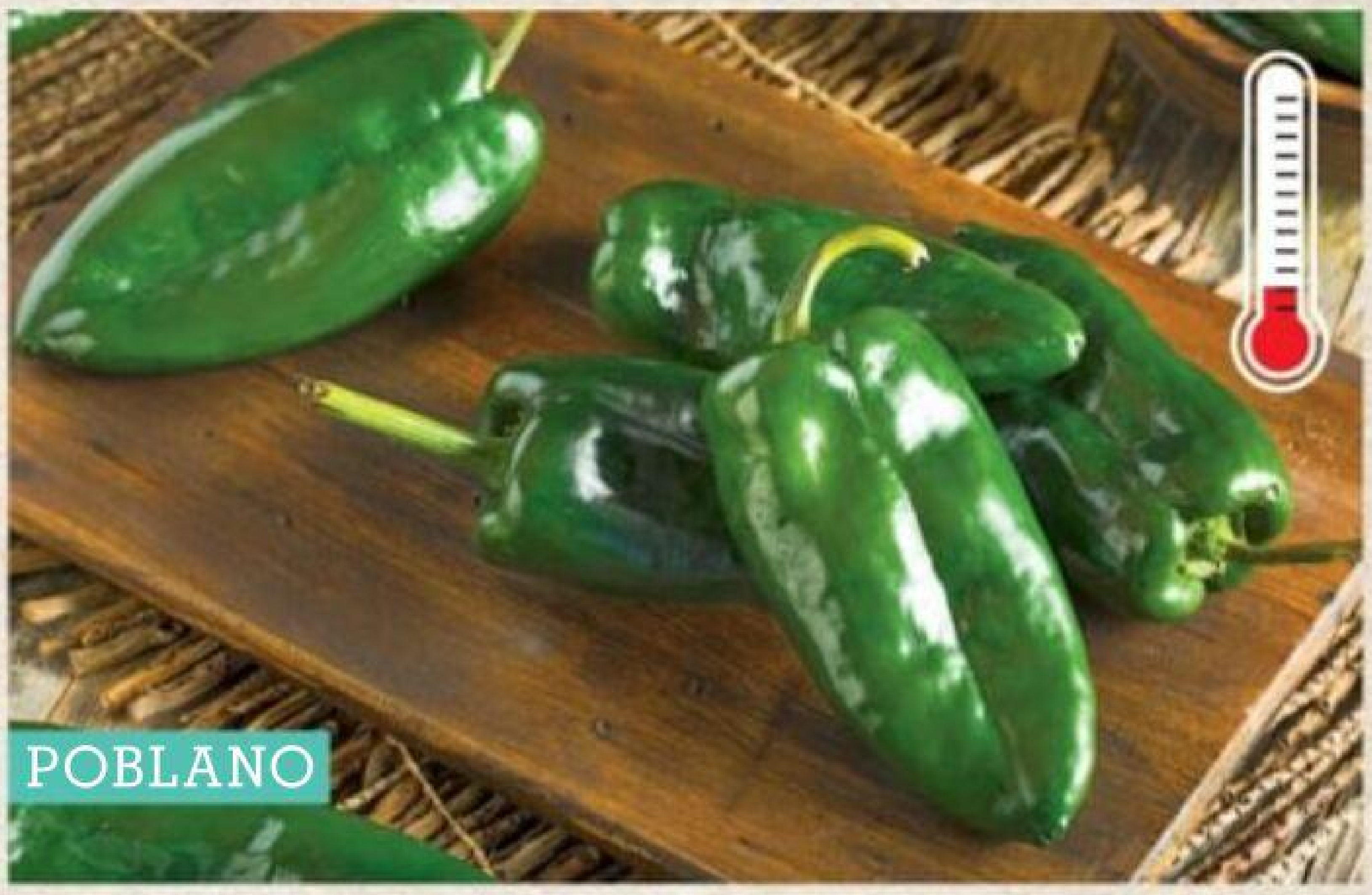
TO GROW To grow from seeds, start them indoors in a warm, sunny location two months before the last frost. Thin the starts down to two plants growing close together, then treat the pair as a single plant so they protect each other from sunscald. Put young plants or nursery transplants 2 feet apart in rows spaced 2 to 3 feet apart. Keep them well-watered as they grow and begin to flower and develop fruit.

TO HARVEST Depending on the variety you choose, you'll start taking peppers two to three months after planting. Use pruning shears to cut the peppers from the plants, taking care not to damage the stems. Peppers turn colors as they mature; in general, the more mature the fruit, the deeper the color and the sweeter the pepper. Be careful when taking spicy hot peppers—wear gloves and don't touch your eyes or other sensitive body parts while harvesting.

PESTS Be sure to watch for aphids, Colorado potato beetles, corn borers and armyworms. You can easily pick off pests or knock them off with a jet from a garden hose.

BEST ZONES 1→11 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞





Famous Peppers

Known for their flavor—and their heat—these peppers spice up any edible garden. Use them fresh or dried—you can keep dried peppers for up to two years.

SERRANO peppers are used for salsas and baked dishes. They are a medium-hot pepper.

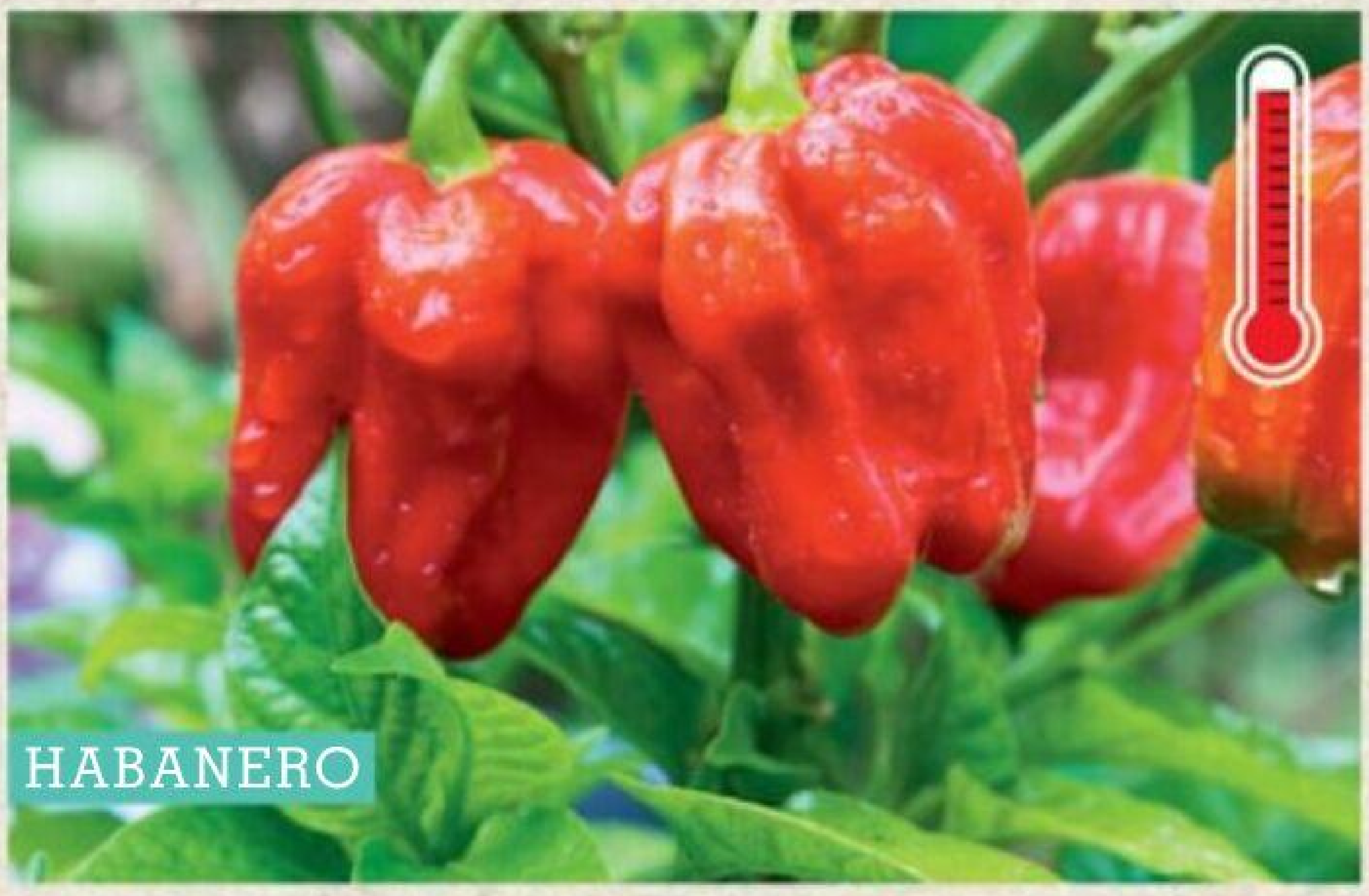
POBLANO chilies are famous as the basis for chile relleno dishes. They are relatively mild. When dried, they are called ancho chilies.

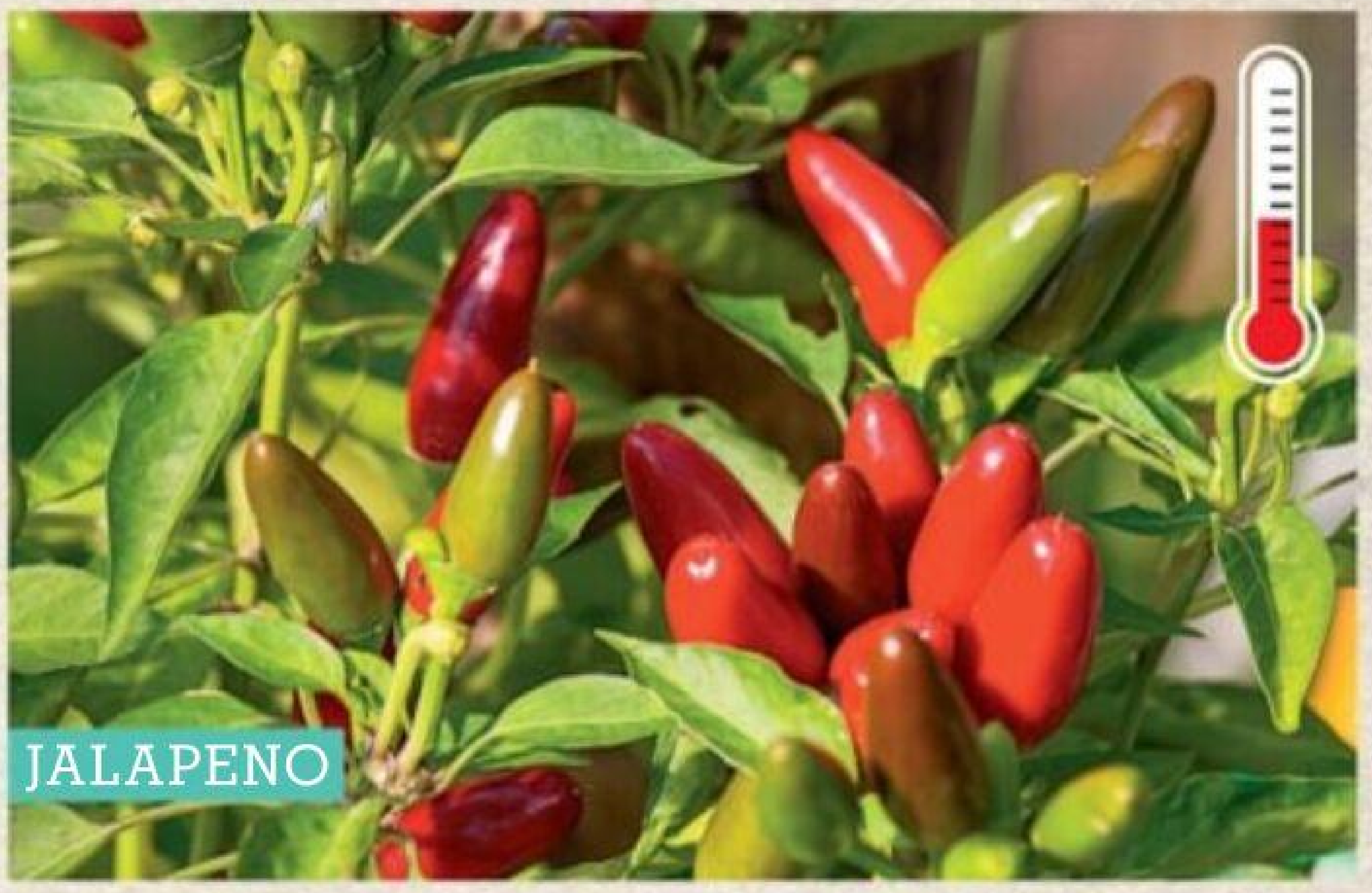
HABANERO chilies are extremely hot—a little bit goes a long way in flavorful salsas and spicy dishes. Wear gloves and wash your hands after handling.

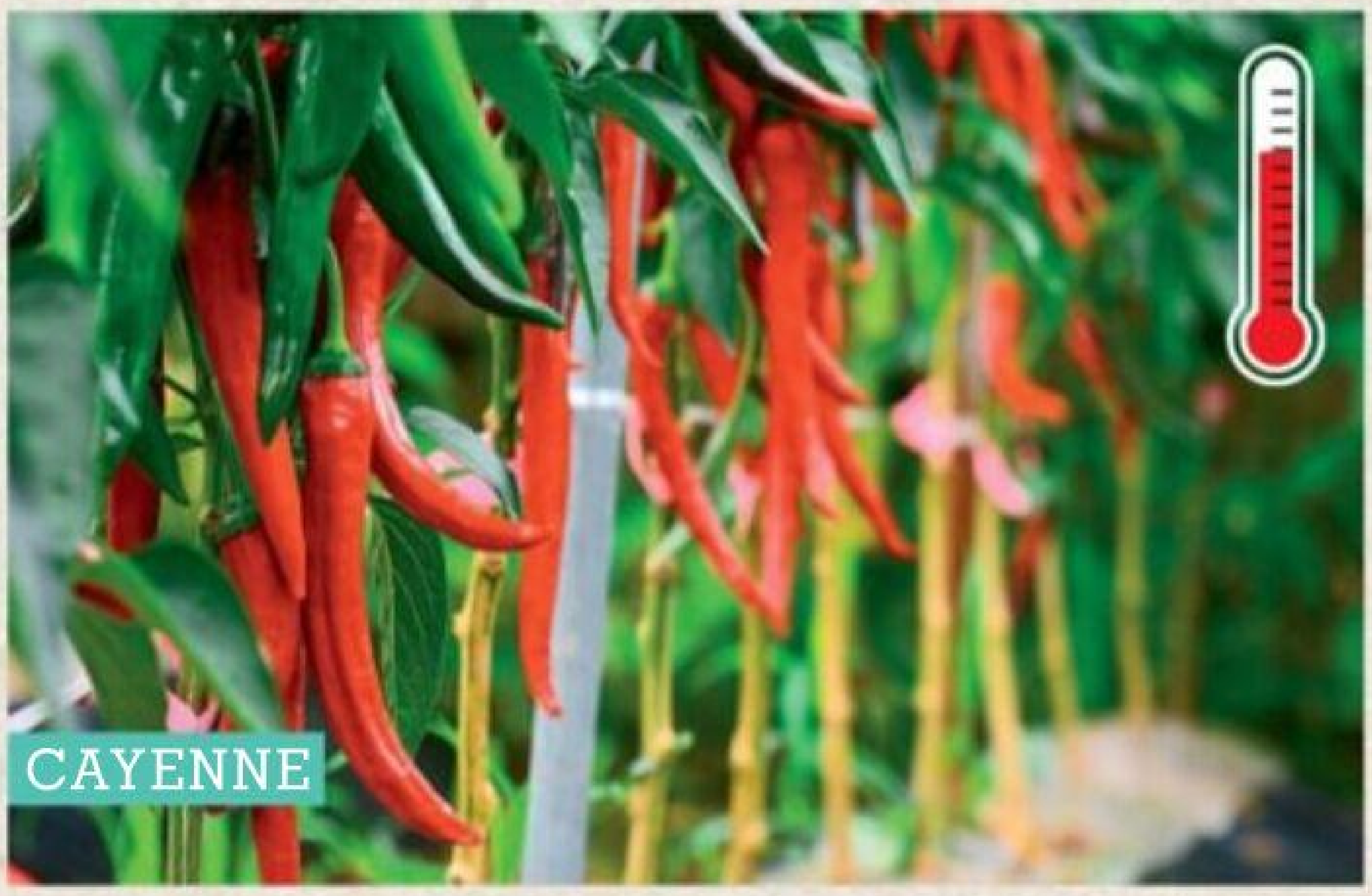
JALAPEÑO peppers are a popular variety that find their way into chili, pizza and spicy sandwiches, and as a condiment at Mexican restaurants.

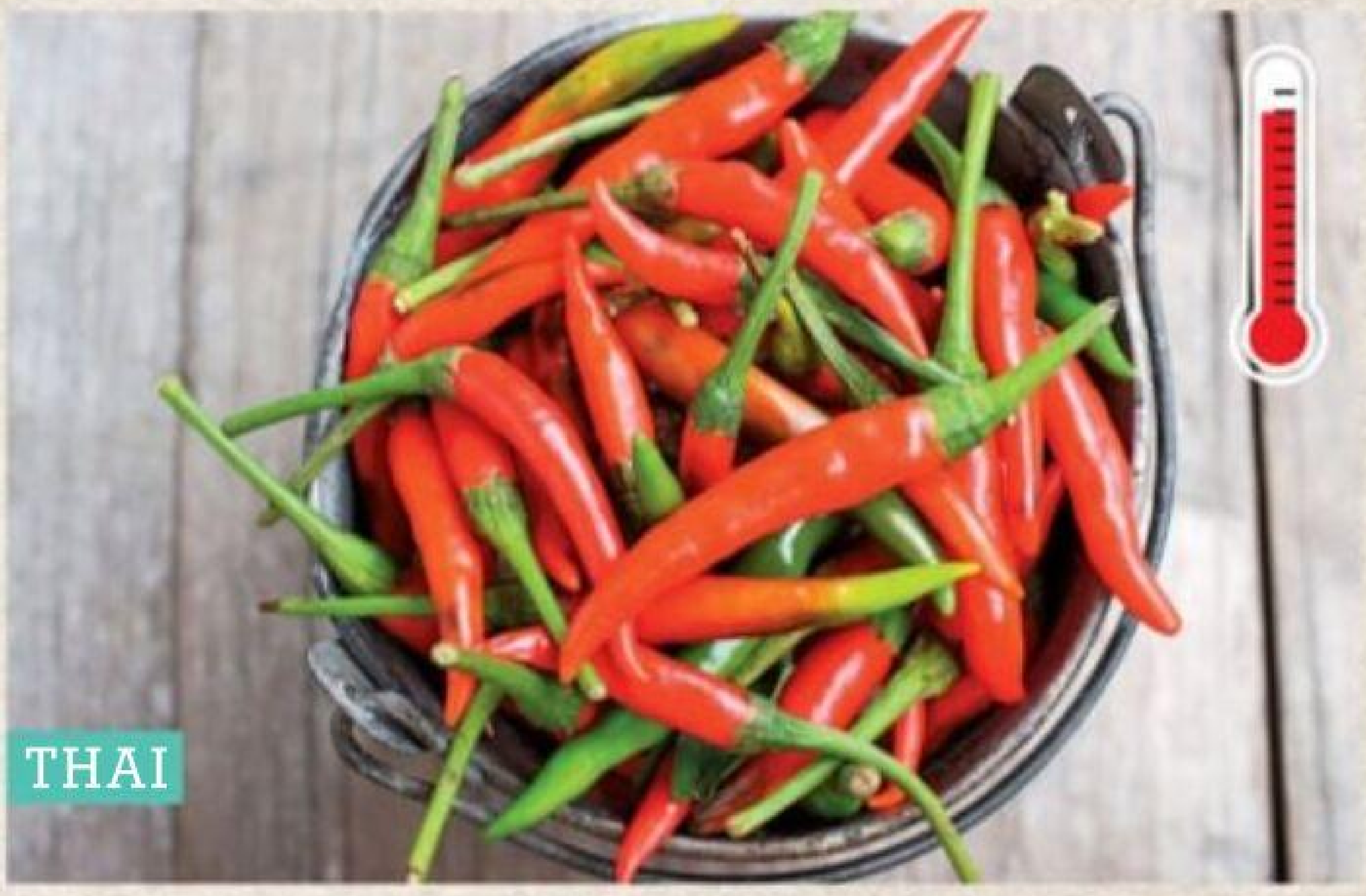
CAYENNE peppers are thin and come in a variety of colors. These peppers often are dried and ground into powder for flavoring soups, stews and sauces.

THAI peppers are among the hottest. They are popular in Asian cuisine. Take care when handling—wear gloves and wash your hands afterward.









Radishes

Little veggies with a big flavor, easy-to-grow radishes are a salad's best friend.

Crunchy, peppery radishes grow readily and make a wonderful addition to summer salads. The familiar short, round, red radishes are only one type of this veggie–it also grows in oblong and tubular shapes, and can be black, white, purple or pink.

Most radishes are quick-growing and ready to harvest just a few weeks after planting, so plan to sow a new crop every two weeks until warm weather sets in. Plant again in early fall. A good method is to have three short rows going–one just sowed, one in mid-cycle and the other ready to harvest. Keep rotating until the hot weather intervenes.

TO GROW

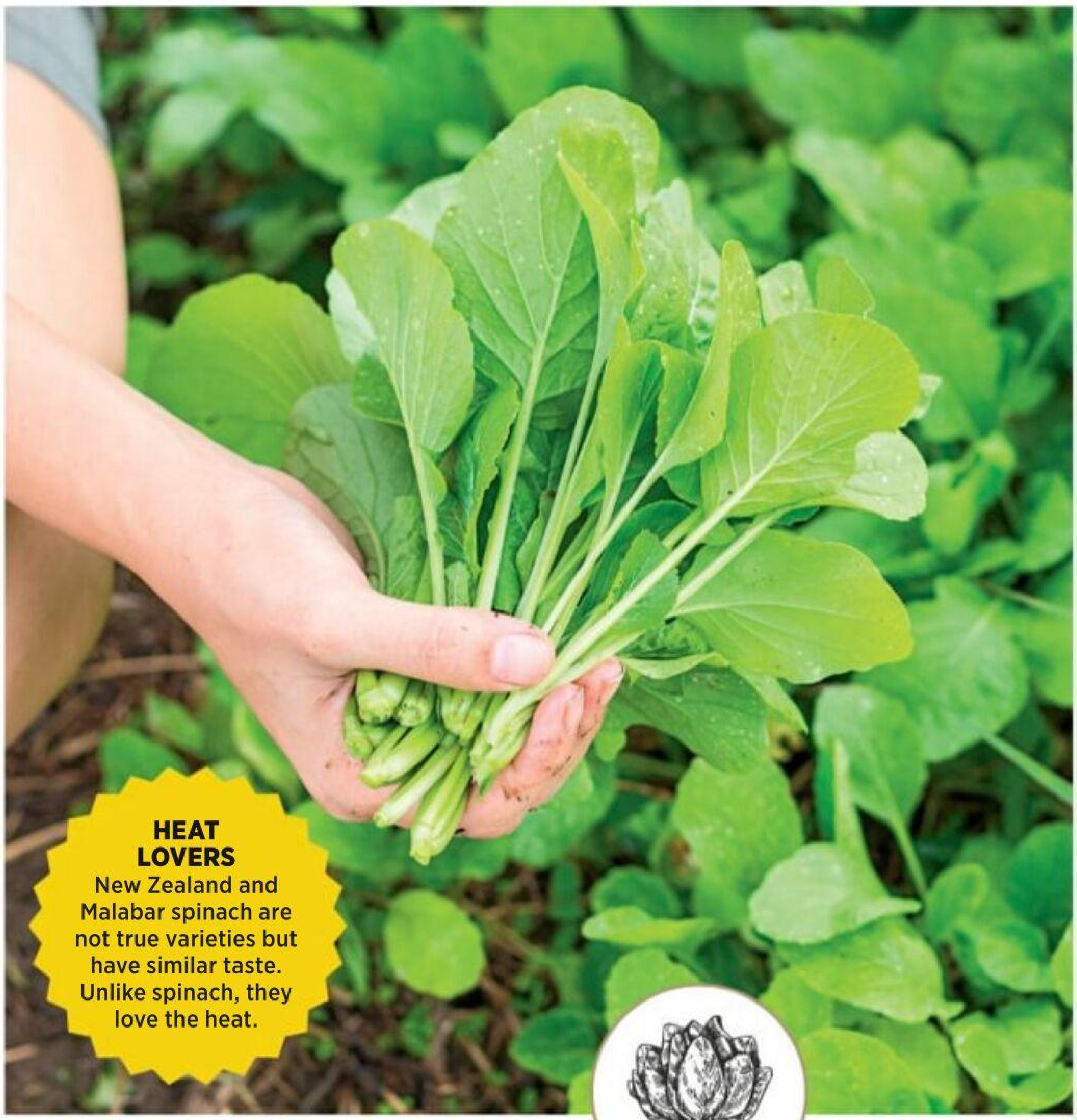
Radishes prefer cool weather, so sow the first seeds one or two weeks before the last frost. Like most root veggies, radishes like the soil well-tilled and free of stones and old roots. Work compost and aged manure into the soil. Sow seeds half an inch deep and 1 inch apart in rows spaced 1 foot apart. Thin seedlings so the plants are 2 to 3 inches apart. Keep the soil moist.

TO HARVEST Pull up young radishes and taste them—if they are to your liking, they're ready to harvest. If left in the ground too long, they'll get tougher and more peppery.

PESTS Cabbage root maggots and flea beetles may be a nuisance, but most pests leave radishes alone. Pick off pests. Protect plants with row covers. Parasitic nematodes help defend against root maggots.

TASTY TIP
The flavors of different types of radishes can vary from mild to spicy-hot. Grow a few varieties to find your happy heat zone.

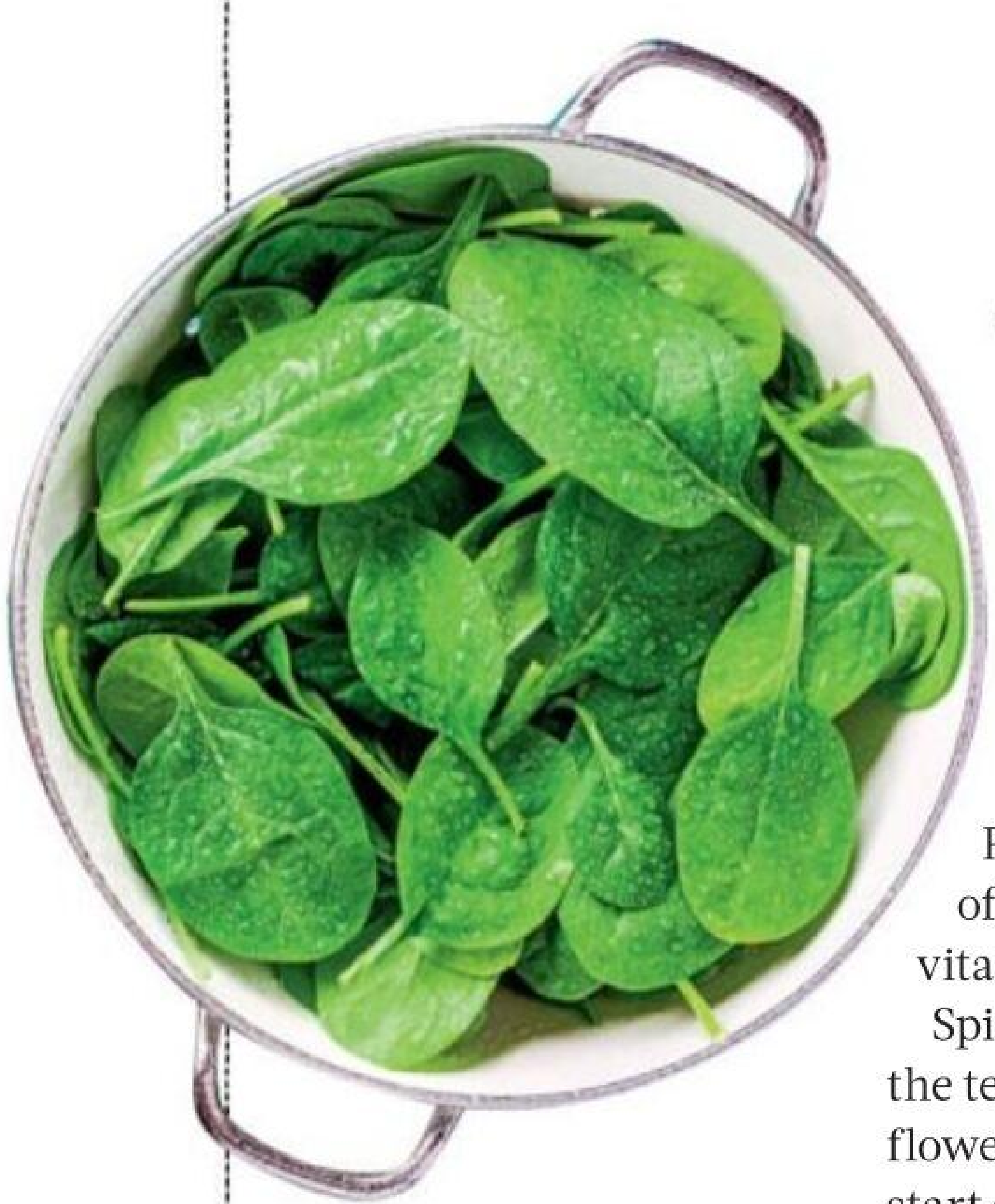
BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** ●



HEAT LOVERS
New Zealand and Malabar spinach are not true varieties but have similar taste. Unlike spinach, they love the heat.

Spinach

Spinach is higher in calcium, iron and vitamins than most other edible greens.



Spinach has come a long way in the past many years, from a vegetable that children pretended to fear to an almost everyday table accompaniment in salads and cooked dishes.

Part of the reason is its modern reputation as one of nature's most nutritious foods, stocked with vitamins, minerals, protein and dietary fiber.

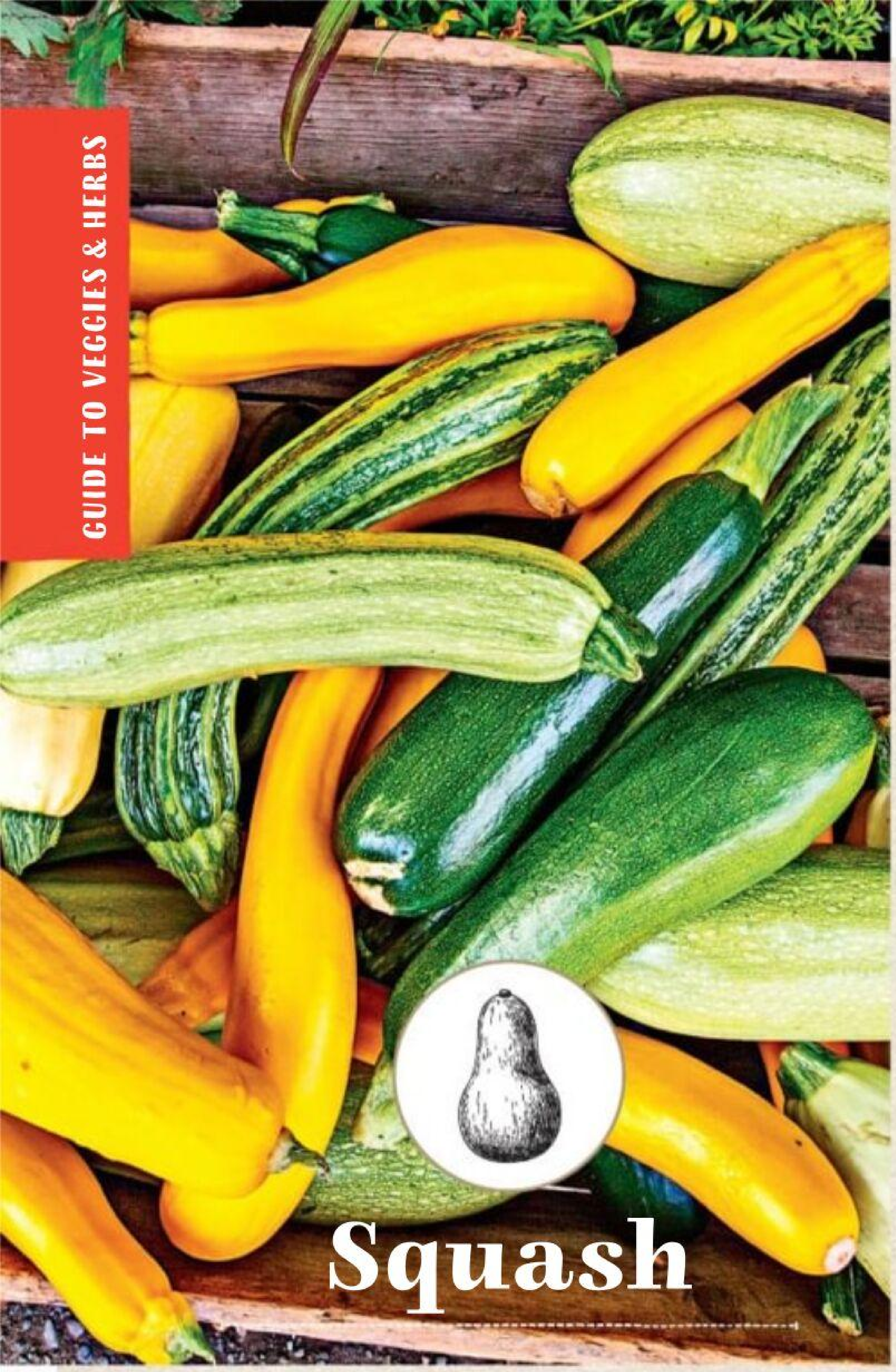
Spinach is easy to grow but prefers cool weather. If the temperature gets too high, the plants may suddenly flower, reducing the quality of the leaves. You'll want to start a spinach crop in early spring or fall.

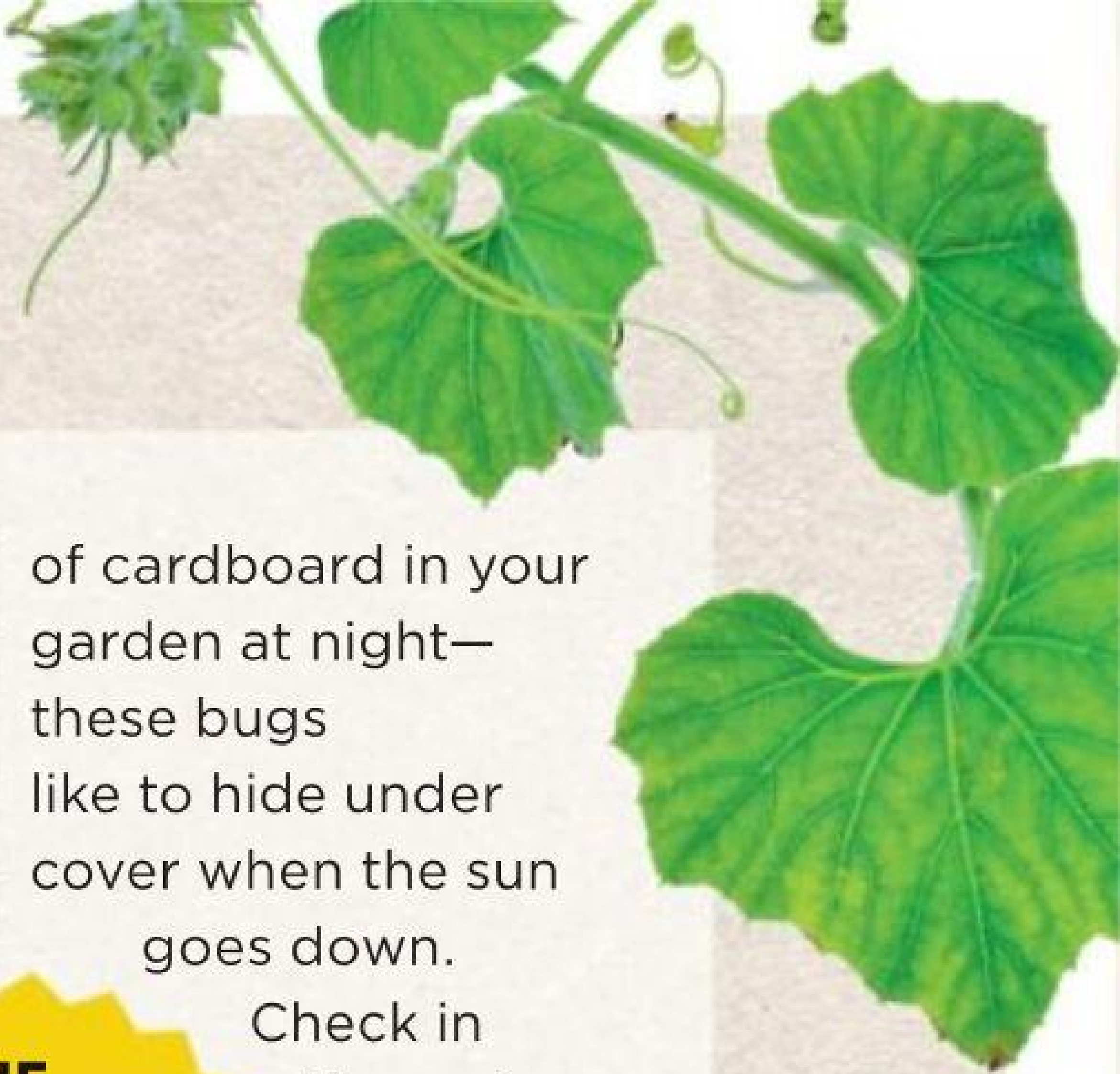
TO GROW Sow seeds in the ground six weeks before the last frost. Set seeds half an inch deep and 2 inches apart, spacing rows about 2 feet apart. When the seedlings reach 3 to 4 inches high, thin them so they're 4 inches apart. If the plants start crowding, remove some and eat them—the young plants will be tender and tasty. Water regularly.

TO HARVEST Spinach grows fairly fast, which means that you will be able to take plants five to six weeks after planting. You can pick lower leaves as the plant grows and take the entire plant when it reaches maturity. If you cut the plant down to within 2 inches of the soil, it may grow a second crop.

PESTS Aphids and leaf miners like spinach. You can knock them off with a spray from a garden hose, or pick them off. Make sure to protect young plants with row covers.

BEST ZONES 3→9 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞





Squash

Creamy, tasty squash can be baked and grilled all by themselves or shredded and added to breads and other baked goods.

Squash is an easy crop to grow, and you'll be rewarded with an ample–if not overflowing–harvest. Some varieties should be eaten soon after being picked; others survive well in long-term storage.

Squash comes in many delightful shapes and colors, from little bell-shaped pods to impressively long, multicolored tubes. Most produce bright, full flowers that add dashes of color to the vegetable garden. One of the most popular squashes, zucchini, is discussed in detail on page 65.

There are two basic types of squash: summer squash and winter squash. They have distinct characteristics, but their planting and care requirements are similar. Both are planted in spring, but summer squashes are harvested in midsummer, while winter squashes take much longer to mature–you'll harvest them in the fall. Adding both types to your garden ensures delicious eating year-round.

TO GROW Plant squash in spring after the last frost has passed. Sow seeds 1 to 2 inches deep in mounded rows, spacing plants 3 feet apart. Sow half a dozen seeds per plant location, thinning them to two plants when the seedlings are well established. Or plant in mounds 6 feet apart to give them plenty of room. Water the soil well and keep the ground moist and mulched; avoid splashing on stems and leaves to help prevent diseases.

TO HARVEST Cut the fruit from the stem—don't pull it off the vine. Leave about 3 inches of stem on the squash.

PESTS Squash bugs and squash vine borers both love their namesakes. If you find these critters hiding under the leaves of your crop, pick them off and, well, squash them. Scrape off any egg clusters you see.

One way you can trap nasty squash bugs and vine borers is by putting a piece of cardboard in your garden at night—these bugs like to hide under cover when the sun goes down. Check in the early morning for the bugs and destroy any you find. In the fall, rake your beds thoroughly to remove old stems and vines that could serve to hold and protect bugs during the winter.

Squash vine borers can destroy a squash crop rather quickly. This moth-like bug lays eggs that become hungry, squash-loving larva that eat squash stems from the inside. Yellow sticky-strip traps are good for snaring the pesky moths—they're drawn to the color. If you've got infected plants, you can carefully slice open the stem and try to remove the larva inside—gentle cutting helps your plant survive. Putting black pepper or diatomaceous earth around your squash plants will discourage infestations, but you'll need to add more of either after each rain.

THE BUZZ
Squash plants depend on pollination to produce fruits. Black-eyed Susan and lavender help attract bees.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ☀☀☀☀☀ **WATER** 💧💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Sweet Corn

Nothing says "summer in America" like just-picked sweet corn.

Fresh off the vine, roasted on the grill or mixed into a salad, the flavor of fresh, homegrown sweet corn will surpass anything you can buy at the store. One reason is that the delicious sugars in sweet corn begin changing into flavorless starches as soon as the ears are picked. Simply put: the fresher, the better. Another reason sweet corn from your own backyard tastes so good is that you grew it yourself!

Newer varieties of sweet corn have various levels of sweetness bred into them, so inspect seed labels and choose accordingly. Corn varieties marked SH2 have about twice the level of sweetness of regular sweet corn; those marked SE (sugar enhanced) are about 50 percent sweeter; EH (everlasting heritage) varieties have normal sweetness.

KEEP 'EM CLOSE
Corn has male tassels and female silk that must pollinate. Plant in short rows so the plants can pollinate easily.

Sweeter varieties have the advantage of staying sweet longer after harvest. Corn kernels can be classic yellow, white, or mixed.

Sweet corn is fun to grow, but it's a big, demanding plant. It likes lots of space, plenty of water, warm weather, and lots of nutrients to produce large, flavorful ears. If you have the space, plant an early- and late-season crop for two tasty harvests.

TO GROW Prepare the planting bed two or three weeks in advance by mixing compost and aged manure into the soil. Mark short planting rows in the bed, 2 to 3 feet apart, and dig shallow irrigation trenches alongside each row. When the threat of frost has passed and the soil is nice and warm, sow seeds alongside each trench, putting the seeds 1 inch deep and 4 to 6 inches apart. Water thoroughly, then not again until the seedlings emerge. When the plants are several inches tall, thin them so they're 18 inches apart. As the corn grows, water regularly. Add mulch to conserve soil moisture. Add a nitrogen-rich fertilizer when the plants are knee high.

TO HARVEST When the silks on the ears turn mostly brown, check the corn for ripeness. Open up the husk on an ear and squeeze the kernels; if they ooze a white, milky juice, then the crop should be ready. To harvest, pull down on the ear and twist to remove it from the stalk.

PESTS Corn has an array of insect enemies. These include corn earworms, corn borers, flea beetles and raccoons. Pick off insects and destroy them. Raccoons are nocturnal feeders, they're persistent and clever, and they like corn. For a raccoon, a fence is only a temporary setback. Try sprinkling blood meal or wood ashes around plants, and hang garlic cloves from the stalks. Dogs are the best deterrent, but you need a faithful animal that enjoys being outside at night and is big enough to scare off pesky raccoons.

BEST ZONES 4→8 **SUNLIGHT** ☀☀☀☀☀ **WATER** 💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Swiss Chard

Colorful and healthful Swiss chard is dazzling in the garden and delicious on the plate.

Leafy, tasty Swiss chard is easy to grow and tolerates heat, so it's a good choice for beginner gardeners and a wonderful provider of fresh summer greens. Use it like you would spinach. It has rosy red or pure white stalks that look beautiful in the vegetable garden, too. Chard likes sun and moist soil but it isn't fussy, and you can plant it anytime from early spring to the late summertime.

QUICK & EASY

CREAM OF SWISS CHARD GRUYERE SOUP

- 1 bunch of Swiss chard
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, diced
- ¼ cup flour
- 3 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup finely grated Gruyère cheese, plus more for serving
- salt and pepper to taste

1. Separate chard stalks and leaves. Fold each leaf in half and cut out the stem. Wash stalks, then dice. Roll leaves into a bundle, then slice. Transfer leaves to a colander and wash, then spin them dry in a salad spinner and set aside. **2.** Melt butter over medium heat in a stockpot. Add onions and chard stalks; sauté until soft, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle in flour and stir until a smooth paste forms. Add stock 1 cup at a time, whisking until smooth. Stir in milk and bring to a simmer. Add chard leaves in batches and simmer soup about 5 to 8 minutes more until chard is soft but still green. **3.** Puree soup with an immersion blender or blender. (Use caution when blending hot liquids!) Stir cheese into pureed soup and serve warm, garnished with more cheese.

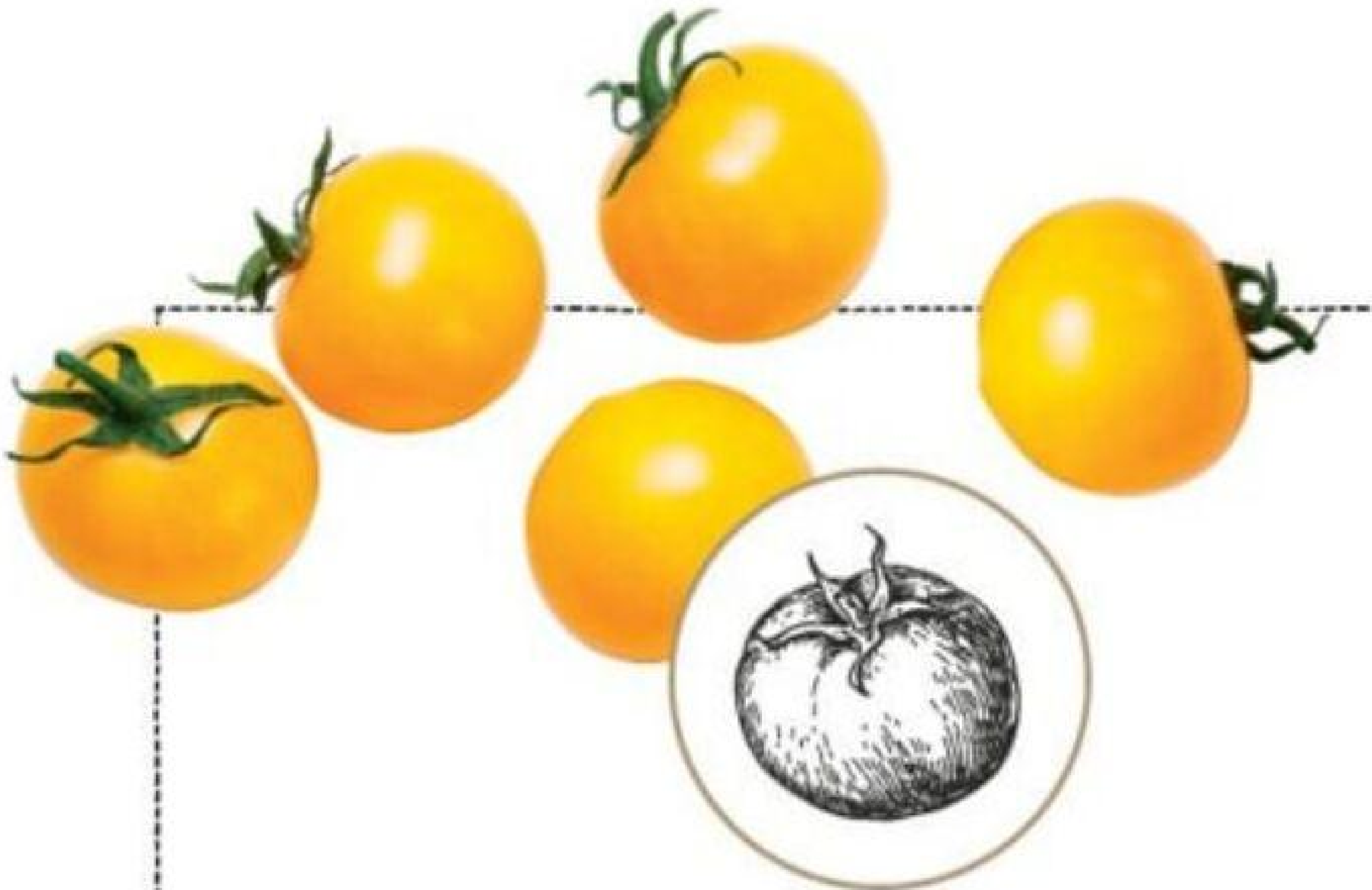
—Recipe from www.earlymorningfarm.com

TO GROW Sow seeds half an inch deep and 2 inches apart, in rows spaced 2 feet apart. When seedlings are 2 to 3 inches tall, thin them so they're about 1 foot apart (you can eat the young seedlings that you pull, too). Make sure to water and weed regularly.

TO HARVEST Start taking chard about two months after planting, when the leaves are full and the stalks sturdy. You can cut off the outer leaves and let the inner leaves and stalks keep growing and producing.

PESTS Watch out for aphids, flea beetles, and leaf miners. Pick off bugs or knock them off with a jet from a garden hose.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞



Tomatoes

This garden favorite is native to Central America and has been bred into hundreds of delicious varieties.

Vine-ripened tomatoes are some of the most useful–and delicious–vegetables in the edible garden, making star appearances in soups, barbecue sauces, salsa, marinara and salads. Standing in the garden on a sunny day biting into a just-picked tomato is one of life's best simple pleasures.

Tomatoes come in all shapes, sizes and colors, from thumb-size yellow cherry tomatoes you eat by the handful to meaty slicers like the familiar round red beefsteak. Not all tomatoes do well in all regions, however. Beefsteaks, for example, like the warm, humid Midwest but not the drier days and cooler nights of the Southwest. It's a good idea to check with local nurseries or your extension service to see what varieties do well in your region.

It can be a bit of a challenge to grow consistently good tomato crops year after year; the plants can be temperamental about their growing conditions, and care is needed to ward off various pests and diseases. They can grow 4 to 6 feet tall and often need support from stakes or tomato cages, especially as they develop heavy fruit.

GET STRONG
"Hardening off" helps plants grow strong. Bring seedlings outside for a few hours daily to gradually expose them to conditions.

TO GROW Tomatoes appreciate a good head start, so plan on sowing seeds indoors at least a month before you'll put the young plants outside in the ground, after the danger of frost has passed and the soil is warm. Start more plants than you'll need and choose only the strongest plants for your garden. Set plants 2 feet apart in rows spaced 3 feet apart. Add stakes at each planting location so you won't disturb roots later.

Dig fairly deep holes so you can cover at least half the stem in dirt. Remove any small leaves along the lower portion of the stem, and set seedlings so that you bury the stem almost to the first set of sturdy leaves. New roots will form along the buried stem, which helps stabilize and strengthen your tomato plants. Water thoroughly but not overly enthusiastically—tomatoes don't care for soggy soil. After the plants are well-established, water once a week or as needed. It's important to keep your watering schedule consistent. Uneven watering can cause the fruits to grow too fast, which leads to "cracked" skin. Add mulch to conserve water and suppress weeds. Feed occasionally with a low-nitrogen fertilizer.

TO HARVEST Depending on the variety, you'll harvest your tomatoes anywhere from two to three months after planting. When tomatoes are plump and juicy, get a basket and harvest in the cool of morning, gently pulling the fruit off the vines. If you've got youngsters, this is a fun job they'll love to do.

PESTS Many little critters like tomatoes, including aphids, Colorado potato beetles and flea beetles. Pick them off or spray them off with a garden hose. A particularly pesky pest is the tomato hornworm, which is a big green caterpillar with a voracious appetite. They're perfectly camouflaged, even when they're full-size, which can be up to 4 inches long. Inspect your plants carefully and frequently. Pick off the caterpillars and destroy them.

BEST ZONES 2→10 SUNLIGHT ●●●● WATER 💧💧💧 PEST POTENTIAL 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Turnips

Turnips are Old World vegetables that have New World flavor.

Turnips are sturdy root vegetables that are easy to grow and are ready to harvest in only two months. You can eat the entire plant–the nutritious greens are a fine addition to a mixed salad, and the bulbous root is good for soups, stews and slow-cooker recipes. Some varieties of turnip are grown solely for their greens.

Turnips prefer to grow in cool weather, so plan an early spring or late summer planting. Fall crops are considered tastier, and you'll have fewer pests trying to invade your crop.

TO GROW Sow seeds a half-inch deep and 1 inch apart in soil that's free of stones and old roots. Keep rows spaced 2 feet apart. Thin emerging seedlings to 6 inches apart. Water moderately but on a regular schedule.

TO HARVEST You can pick the young greens as they fill out, taking only the outer leaves if you're growing turnips as a root crop. Otherwise, cut off the greens about 1 inch above the soil level—you may get a second, late-season crop. Harvest the roots when they are 2 to 4 inches in diameter, prying them up with a garden fork. You can leave the roots in the ground to store them if you cover the plants with a thick layer of straw, but you'll want to dig them out before the ground freezes. Store harvested turnips in a cool, dark place—they'll keep up to four months.

PESTS Cabbage root maggots and wireworms eat turnips. Protect young plants with row covers.

BOO!
According to Irish folklore, Jack O'Lantern was a ghost who used a hollow turnip with a burning coal inside to light his way.

BEST ZONES 3→9 SUNLIGHT ☀☀☀☀ WATER 💧💧💧 PEST POTENTIAL 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Zucchini

Zucchini can overwhelm unsuspecting gardeners with bumper crops, but it's delicious and easy to grow.

Zucchini is tasty, high in nutrition, useful in so many recipes and famously prolific, producing a lot of fruit with little effort. Zucchini is a summer squash that does well in a variety of conditions, and it is an excellent addition to the edible garden. However, it might take a little experimenting to find out how much zucchini you and your family can use in a year and how much you'll end up giving away to friends and neighbors.

Zucchini like cool weather and do well with an early spring planting. The fruits are oblong and variations include green, striped and golden yellow. The plant shows off large, trumpet-like flowers that are edible. Note that zucchini, like other squashes, relies on bees for pollination. For a good crop, plant lavender, mint, asters and other flowering plants that attract bees.

TO GROW Plant zucchini in spring after frost has passed and the soil is nicely warmed. Sow seeds 1 to 2 inches deep in mounded rows, spacing plants 3 feet apart. Sow half a dozen seeds per plant location, thinning them to two plants when the seedlings are well established. Or, plant zucchini in mounds spaced 6 feet apart to give the plants plenty of room. Water the soil well and keep the ground moist and mulched, but avoid splashing on stems and leaves to help prevent diseases.

TO HARVEST Cut the fruit from the stem—don't pull it off the vine. Leave about 3 inches of stem.

PESTS The squash bug and the squash vine borer are chief invaders. Check under your zucchini leaves throughout the season to find infestations and stop them before they spread.

The best control is to pick squash bugs off the leaves and kill them. Check the under leaves for small brown eggs and scrape off any you find. Put a piece of cardboard out at night and check it first thing in the morning for squash bugs—when darkness falls, squash bugs tend to hide under cover. In the autumn, be sure to rake up garden beds and get rid of old vines to keep bugs from overwintering in your garden.

It's a shock to see a fine crop of zucchini plants suddenly wilt. The likely culprit is the squash vine borer, a mothlike insect whose larvae eat away at squash stems from the inside. Try to catch and kill the moths in the evening or early morning before they can lay eggs on the plants. Set out sticky strip traps. If you suspect a plant is infected, carefully slit the stem and try to extract the larva inside. Sprinkle black pepper or diatomaceous earth around the plants to discourage infestations, and reapply after rain.

BEST ZONES 2→10 **SUNLIGHT** ●●●● **WATER** 💧💧💧💧💧 **PEST POTENTIAL** 🐞🐞🐞🐞

GARDEN GALLERY

These heavenly gardens are full of good ideas and earthly delights.

GARDEN GALLERY

More Than a Garden

Everyone says it's gorgeous, but this garden's beauty is more than good looks.

BY JOHN RIHA PHOTOS BY SHAWNA CORONADO

Wedge-shaped plantings in the front-yard garden fan out in colorful rays of cabbage, kale and collard greens.

SHAWNA CORONADO knows pain. Several years ago she was diagnosed with spinal osteoarthritis, a debilitating condition that causes severe pain. Fortunately, she had help.

It was growing in her yard.

A devotee of organic lifestyles and gardening, Shawna wanted to be free of the medications that were part of her life. She began experimenting with an anti-inflammatory diet–no diary, sugar or grains. Her abundant garden produce–kale, chard, cucumbers–became a mainstay of her meals and energized her passion for healthy lifestyles.

"I couldn't believe the changes," she says. "My pain levels went down 80 percent. I went off my blood pressure medicine. My whole body got healthier."

For Shawna, coming to an anti-inflammation diet has been yet another step on her journey › as garden blogger, photographer and social media influencer. She preaches sustainability and healthy eating, but she's got a wry, down-to-earth side, too. "I cheat with martinis," she confesses, "because, you know, it's martinis!"

Shawna's love of gardening began years ago after a "horrid" stint at a marketing firm in Chicago. Living in the suburbs with her husband, two daughters and a tiny garden, she found herself rarely at home, working "dark to dark." Finally, she'd had enough. After walking off her job, a distraught Shawna was counseled by her mother-in-law to "do that gardening thing that you like."

Encouraged by her family, she wrangled a job as a designer for local landscaping companies and

Shawna loves color combinations. Here, a rainbow of edibles and flowers are guarded with rabbit-proof borders of pungent marigolds and spicy globe basil.

Dinosaur kale is one of her favorites. "Don't plant it in the same spot for more than four years," she cautions.

A flowering halcyon hosta and bright lights Swiss chard are pretty as a picture.

> "In my noggin there are no rules; just try to be creative."
> Shawna Coronado

became immersed in the world of growing things. Her own garden became her experimental proving ground. With no formal gardening education, she simply dug into the earth, amending soils, adding plants and experimenting with combinations.

"Not having horticultural training was beneficial for me," she says. "I didn't have any strict guidelines. In my noggin, there are no rules. Just try to be creative."

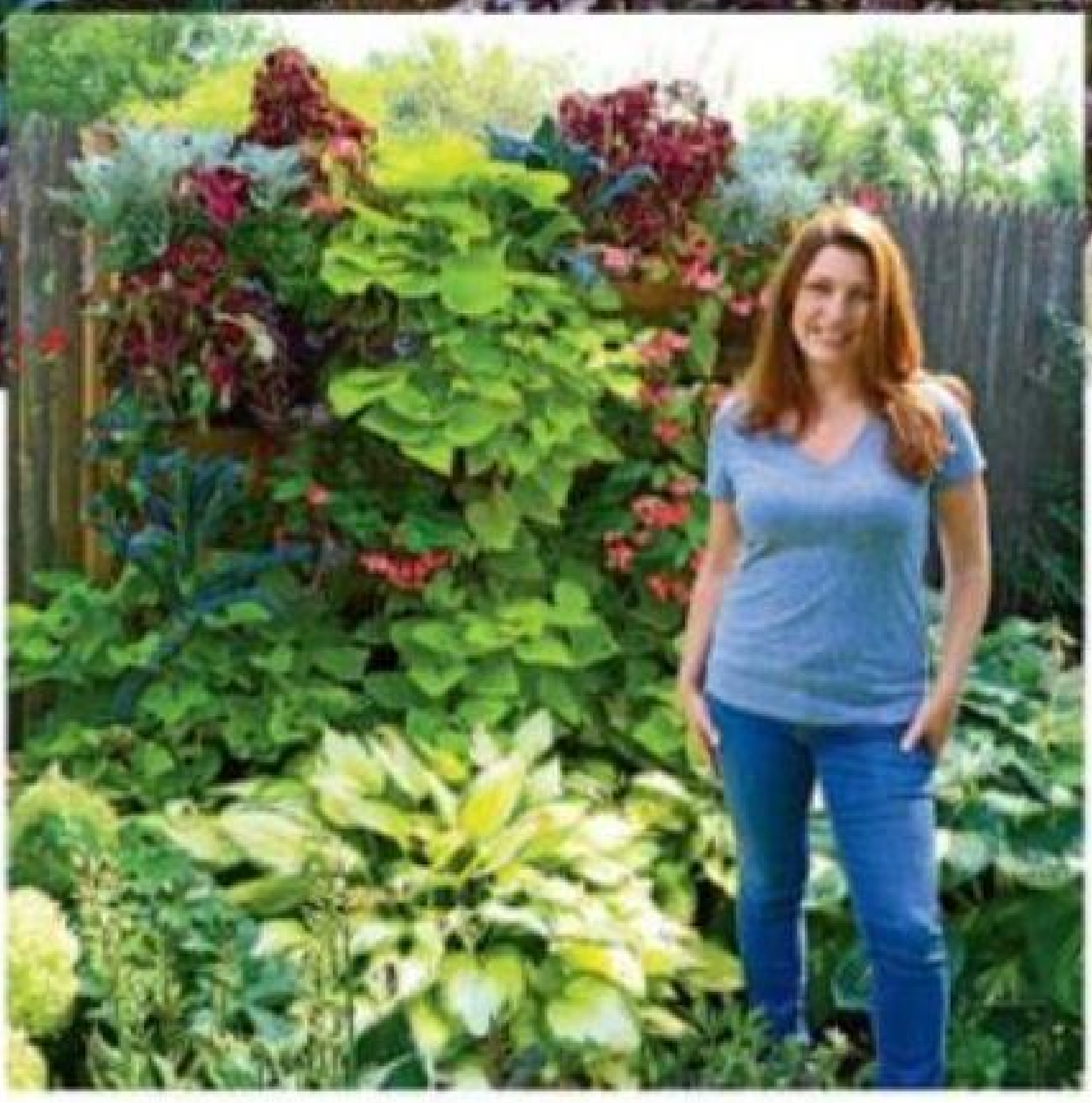
Well, maybe one Golden Rule: till-free soil.

"The thing that makes the garden easier is till-free soil," Shawna says. "That's the magic, because good soil provides a better system for your roots. Good soil holds moisture and enables roots to reach out." Tilling, she explains, can kill microbes and other beneficial soil-dwellers.

Shawna's till-free strategy takes a measured approach. "That first ›

A "living wall" spills over with parsley, cucumbers and sweet potato vines.

The colorful fence mural was created by a local artist.



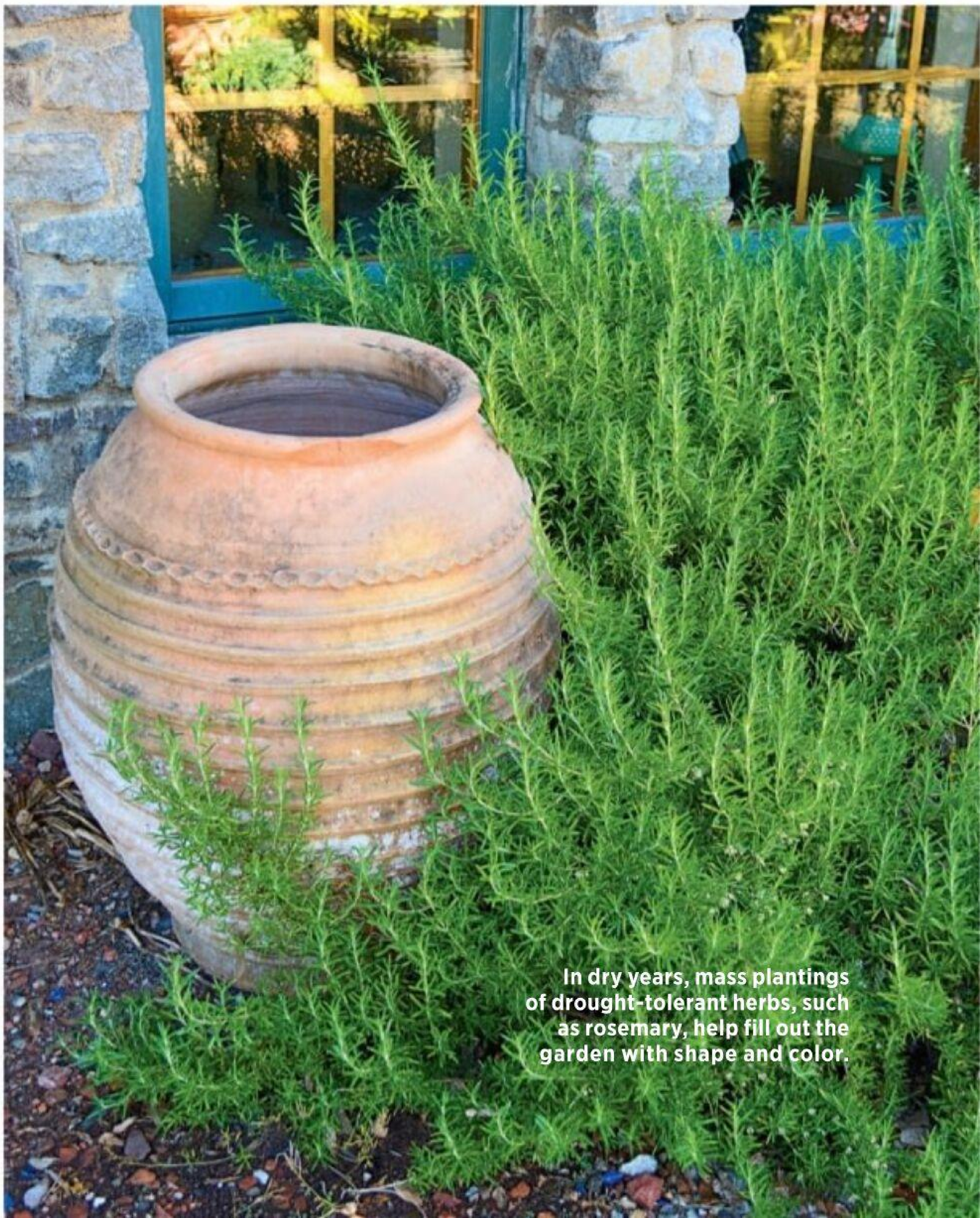
Shawna Coronado

year, I laid a layer of rotted manure and leaf mulch over the heavy clay soils that we have," says Shawna, "and I dug it under. After that, I've never turned the soil over again."

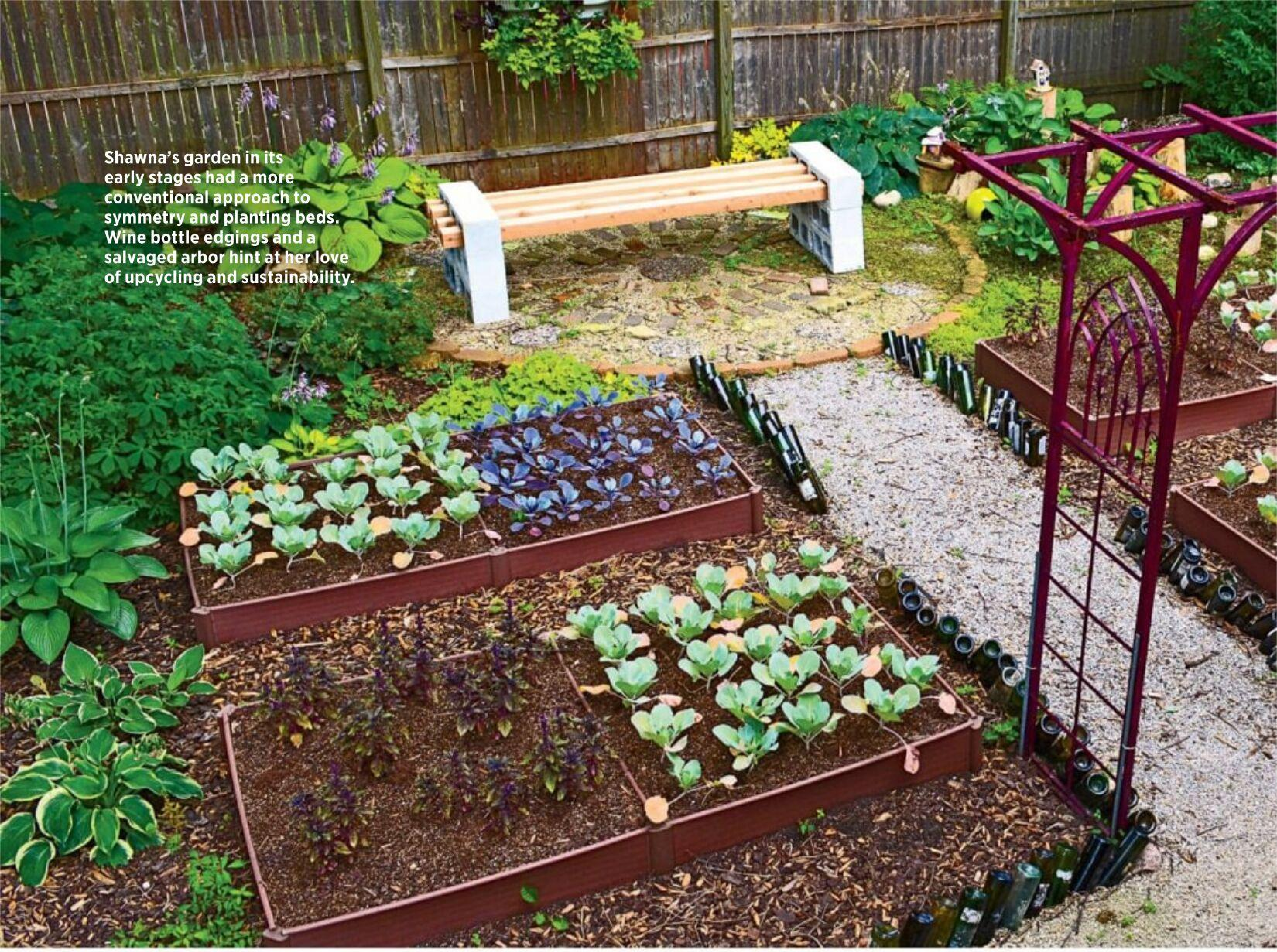
In the second year, her garden beds got a layer of wood-chip mulch. Third year, a layer of leaf mold. Fourth year, back to manure again. Fifth year, compost.

"With a soil like that, I work less," she says. "I don't add heavy fertilizer, and I don't have to water as much."

Now, years after her mother-in-law encouraged her to "do that gardening thing," the half-acre Coronado yard is a lush, colorful mix of vegetables and herbs interplanted with ornamental plants and flowers. A fan of bio-intensive ›



In dry years, mass plantings of drought-tolerant herbs, such as rosemary, help fill out the garden with shape and color.



Shawna's garden in its early stages had a more conventional approach to symmetry and planting beds. Wine bottle edgings and a salvaged arbor hint at her love of upcycling and sustainability.

Mustard enjoys the company of pansies and roses.

Shawna's exotic "jungle" mixes chard, banana, lobelia, and tall flowers.

Herbs are more than food; they're about beauty and scent and how you feel when you walk in the garden.

Cut-stone paths put all the edibles within easy reach.

planting, Shawna puts plants chockablock to help squeeze out weeds and keep soil shaded so moisture won't evaporate quickly.

"People can become overwhelmed with the idea of building a bigger garden," she notes, "but the reality is you just do it at your own pace. For me, it was a gradual process where I learned how to garden in my own fashion."

If she's a gardener first, she's a community advocate a close second. She urges gardeners to plant additional rows of edibles to help feed the community. "I donate 500 pounds of food every year to my local food pantry," says Shawna.

"For me, a garden is far more than a garden. It's a way to find your health, it's a way to find beauty and more importantly, it's a way to help community." ■

GARDEN GALLERY

Go With the Flow

Curved steel planting beds make a stylish edible garden in the Northwest.

BY JOHN RIHA PHOTOS BY CAMERON SCOTT

Designed to balance the strong architectural lines of the house, beds of corten steel put an overflow bounty of kale, lettuce, corn and herbs only steps away from Vicki Reed's kitchen.

Deep raised beds are great for growing big veggies, such as sweet corn.

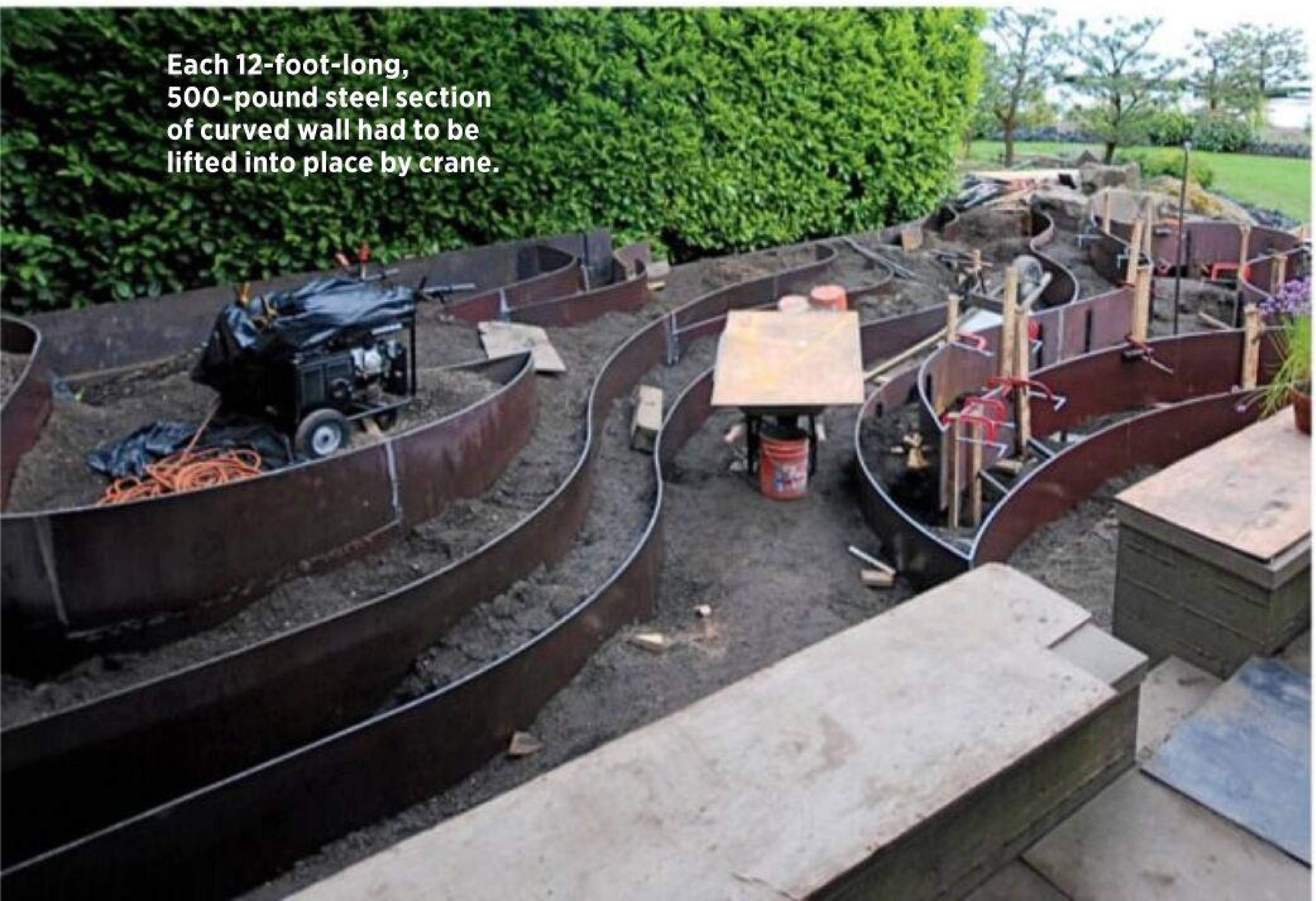
Flagstones and crushed-gravel paths make it easy to reach into each bed.

"YOU CAN TAKE the girl out of the country," says Vicki Reed, "but you can't take the country out of the girl."

Raised in Portland, Oregon, Vicki was a television producer in New York when she decided she'd had her fill of a frenetic, stress-filled life in the big city and moved back to the cool, green Pacific Northwest. There, on the shores of Lake Washington, outside of Seattle, she rekindled her love for vegetable and herb gardening.

"I grew up just after the Great Depression," says Vicki, "and my grandparents had extensive vegetable gardens. Back then, almost everybody did. So it makes sense to me—pulling carrots out of the ground and seeing things grow and knowing the difference between if you'd just picked it and ate it and if it had spent most of its life in a fuselage."

Apparently, you can't take the designer out of the girl, either. Prompted by her background in architectural history, Vicki decided that some old, rectilinear


Each 12-foot-long, 500-pound steel section of curved wall had to be lifted into place by crane.

“Something about growing your own food just sparks romanticism.”

Vicki Reed

raised beds made of timbers just didn’t blend with the clean, Asian-influenced design of her house. She wanted a vegetable garden with “a spare sensibility,” but she wasn’t sure what that might be. So when a friend showed her a photo of the work of a local landscape designer, Cameron Scott of Exteriorscapes, Vicki knew she’d found the right collaborator.

With a mutual admiration for the fluid, undulating designs of Scottish landscaper Charles Jencks, Vicki and Cameron devised a series of curved, tiered beds that flowed out over the yard in back of the house. The bed walls are half-inch-thick corten steel—steel made to oxidize for a rustic appearance and a look that blends especially well with modern design.

“It’s a perfect material for raised beds, especially here in the Northwest,” Cameron says. “It absorbs heat and helps the soil stay warm during our cooler days.”

Individual sections of the beds were fabricated in Seattle then trucked to the house, lifted into place with a crane and welded together to form the walls.

With the beds in place, Vicki set about planting bumper crops of kale, lettuce, squash, herbs and sweet corn.

“I love eating fresh vegetables and herbs,” says Vicki. “There’s something about growing your own food that just sparks romanticism in people.” ■

GARDEN GALLERY

Creating a Buzz

Designed as a haven for bees and butterflies, this pollinator garden is a step toward a healthy planet.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN RIHA

Louise Shawkat keeps trees to a minimum so that her garden gets maximum sunshine. The flowers of cilantro that's gone to seed help attract pollinators.

Lewisia and alliums lure pollinators near the vegetable beds.

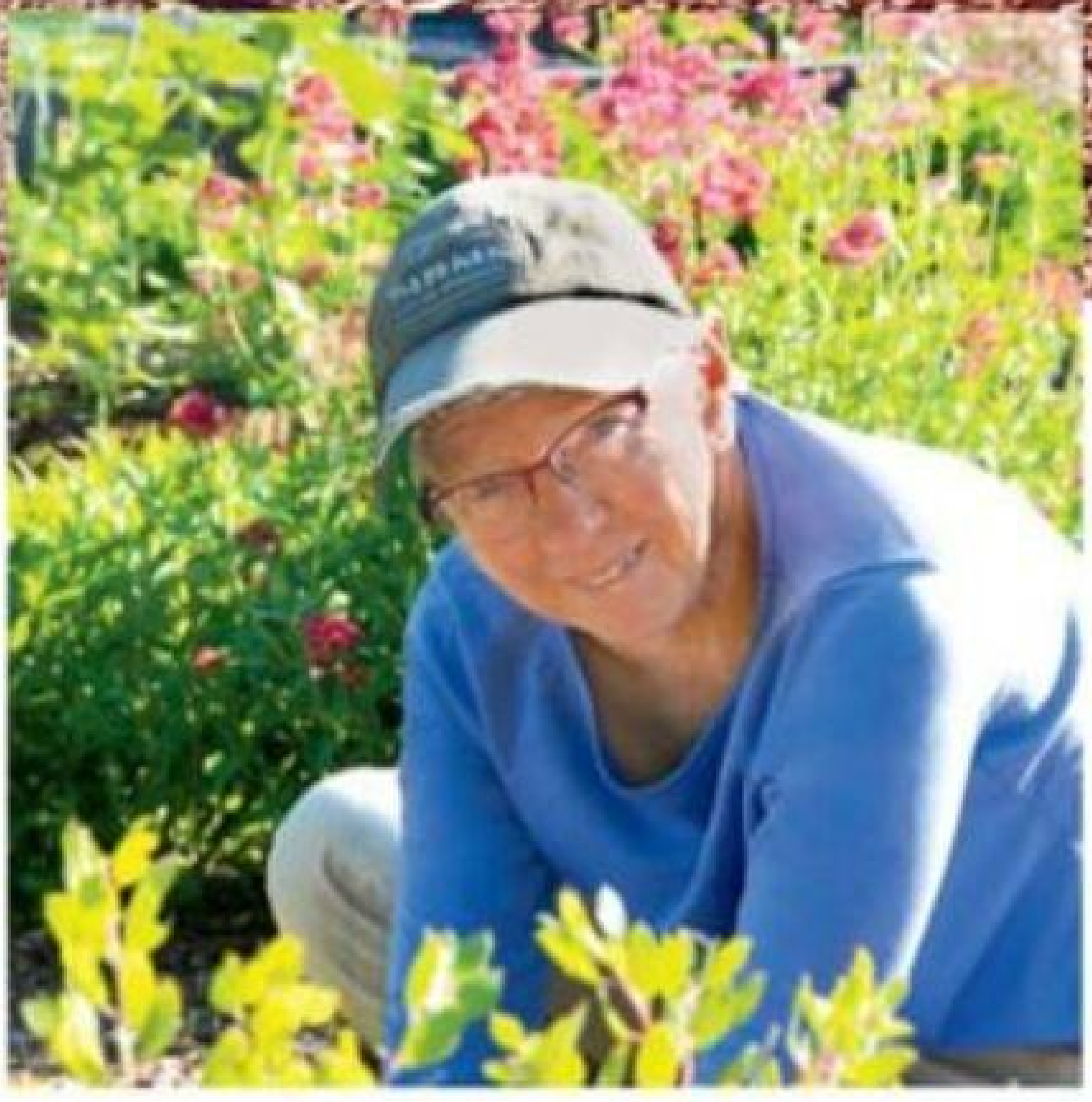
WALK INTO LOUISE Shawkat's garden, and one of the first things you'll notice is that it's moving–and humming. There's a gentle undercurrent of buzzing bees. At the entry, a pair of flowering crabapple trees are alive with bees, and in the backyard, the bees dart in and out of the heaps of colorful flowers that border the meandering paths and raised veggie beds. Butterflies explore the blossoms, too, and a chorus of red-winged blackbirds, finches and orioles add to the symphony.

That enchanting buzz of activity is by design. Louise's garden in Ashland, Oregon, is an officially recognized Pollinator Garden by the local chapter of Bee City USA, an organization that stresses the importance of the relationships ›

Bees getting busy in the lavender

To know your garden, plant something and see what happens.

Alliums, poppies and baptisia line the winding gravel paths.



Louise Shawkat

between plants, pollinators such as bees and the world's food supply.

"I never used to think that pollination was my responsibility," says Louise, "but it is. With climate change and other issues, we all have to be aware of what's important. Even if it's one garden at a time."

With purposeful plantings of baptisia, lewisia, lavender and other attractor plants, Louise's garden is a haven for busy pollinators. But it's also beautiful–a serene pastiche of colorful blossoms that flow over the mounded beds in Louise's backyard. Long stems of flowering cilantro, left to go to seed, wave from the stout raised beds.

"When I look out at this garden," Louise says, "my heart just jumps. It's really a joy."

Louise's thumb, however, wasn't always as green. Years ago, living in a condo in Louisville, Kentucky, she didn't garden until she volunteered to tend beds of irises that ringed the property. With an eye to variety and perennials, she eventually turned the ho-hum plantings into spaces so enchanting that they were featured on a walking garden tour.

When she moved to Oregon to be closer to family, Louise brought

A bee gathers nectar from a flowering crabapple blossom.

along her greening thumb. She enrolled in the local Master Gardener program to familiarize herself with local flora and to meet new people.

A house that she'd bought on the edge of town was ideal for the bigger, more textural garden she envisioned. Louise sat down with a local design firm, KenCairn Landscape Architecture, to develop a plan for her quarter-acre property that featured lots of perennials alongside abundant veggie beds.

She worked hard to amend southern Oregon's notorious clay soils and enjoyed tinkering to find plants that thrived in her yard.

"It's fun to experiment," Louise says. "The best way to know your garden is to plant something and see what happens!"

One of her biggest delights? Her abundant beds of kale, tomatoes, strawberries and asparagus. But sometimes those tasty treats don't even make it inside.

"There's nothing like picking cherry tomatoes and then realizing you have nothing to bring inside because you stood out in the garden and ate everything right off the vine," she explains with a smile. "But I do enjoy sharing and bonding with friends and neighbors, too. It's a real mood-lifter!" ■

Alliums are a favorite of pollinators, but luckily rabbits and rodents don't care for them.

HELPING POLLINATORS

Pollinators are animals that help plants reproduce by carrying grains of pollen from the male parts of a flowering plant to the female parts. Pollination is essential for many plants to be able to produce their fruits and vegetables. Common pollinators include bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, bats and moths. Almost 90 percent of the world's wild plants depend on pollinators for reproduction, including nearly one-third of the world's food crops.

Recently, however, pollinators have been dying and going extinct at accelerating rates, jeopardizing food crops all over the globe. Loss of habitat and misuse of pesticides are two main reasons.

The Bee City USA program was developed to educate municipalities and homeowners on the importance of helping pollinators—and food crops—survive. It was started in 2012 and offers guidelines for gardeners:

- Plant a variety of colors and shapes that attract a variety of animal pollinators.
- Plant flowering species that bloom at different times of the year.
- Plant in clumps to better attract pollinators.

Ashland, Oregon, where Louise Shawkat lives, was designated a Bee City in 2015. To learn more about the program, check out *beecityusa.org*

HANDS-ON GARDEN PROJECTS

These practical, money-saving ideas will help you grow stronger plants, produce bigger harvests and preserve your tasty edibles.

Raised beds are the best way to give your edible plants the soil nutrients they need.

GARDEN PROJECTS

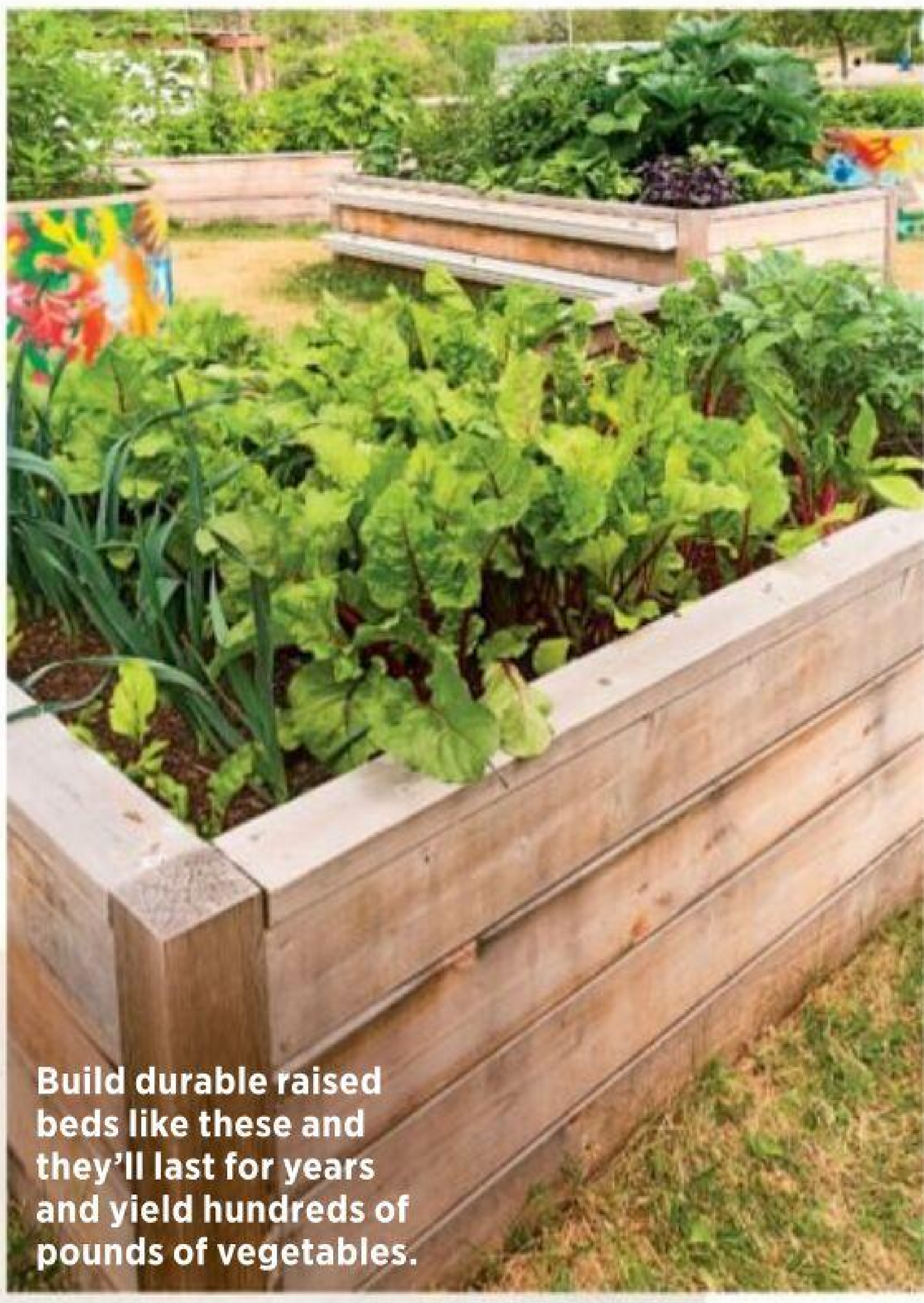
Building a Raised Bed

This edible-garden mainstay is a project that pays off with years of fantastic harvests. BY DAVE TOHT

A COUPLE OF centuries ago, Parisian market gardeners learned if they mounded up their garden beds and tilled deeply, they could grow more vegetables in a lot less space. Paths between the beds let them reach the plants without compacting the soil. The increase in produce? *Incroyable!*

A modern variation on that theme, the boxed raised bed, offers even more advantages: It's high enough to be an easy reach for tilling, weeding and harvesting, and you can readily add nutrients and drip irrigation to help your plants thrive.

Our version is also easy to build. It's made of ¾-inch pressure-treated plywood braced by 4x4 posts and has bands of 2x2 reinforcements around the perimeter to help stiffen the sides. It can be built in about a day. Its mid-century-modern styling is a boon for front-yard gardeners who want their garden structure to be as beautiful as it is bountiful. ›



Build durable raised beds like these and they'll last for years and yield hundreds of pounds of vegetables.

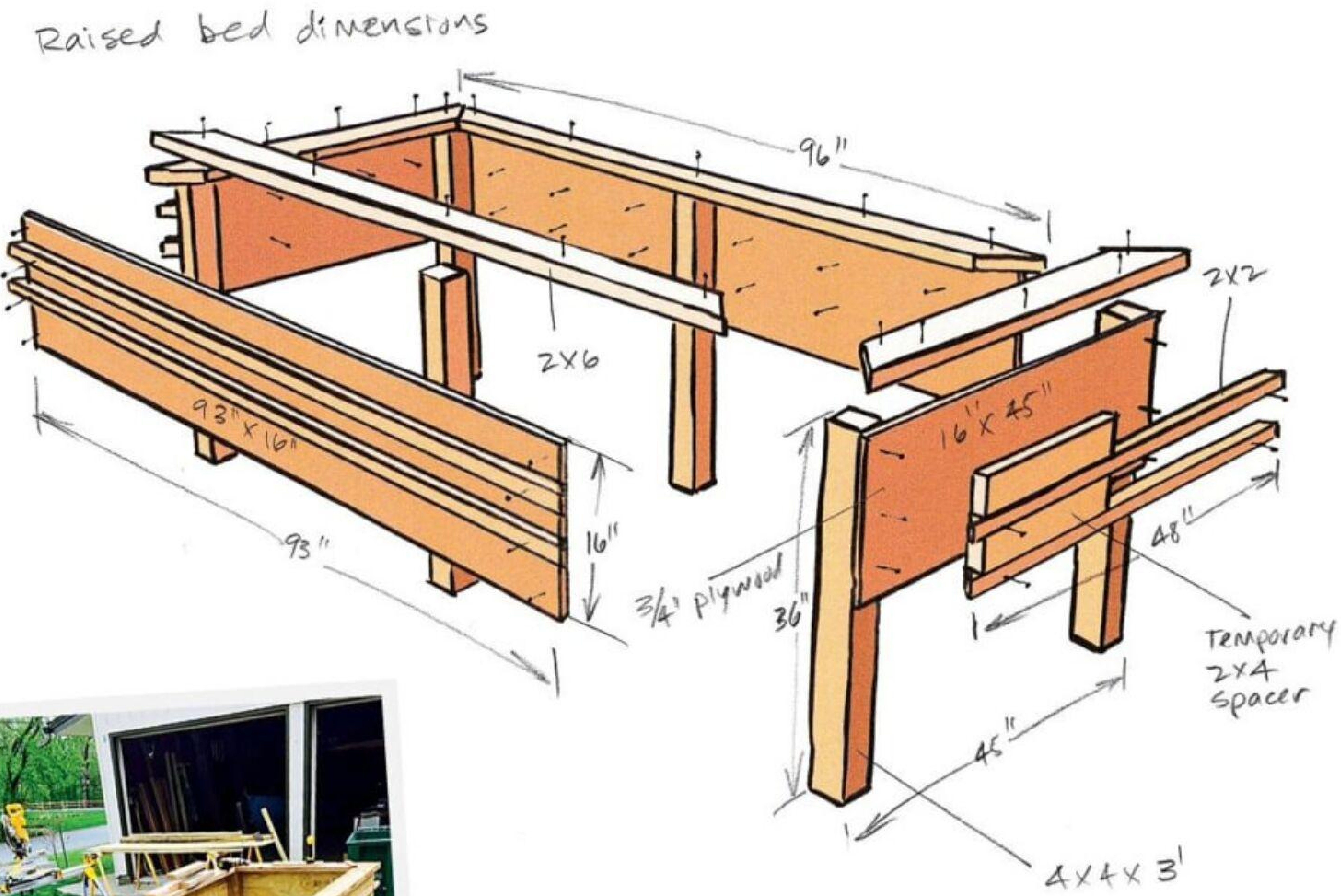
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Tools

- Sawhorses
- Measuring tape
- Speed square
- Framing square
- Circular saw
- 4 squeeze or C-clamps
- Drill/driver and bits
- Level
- Shovel
- Posthole digger
- Ear and eye protection
- Dust mask and gloves

Materials

- 2 scrap 2x4s for holding plywood when cutting
- 1 4x8 sheet of ¾-inch pressure-treated plywood
- 3 pressure-treated 4x4s, 6 feet long
- 3 pressure-treated 2x6s, 8 feet long
- 2 scrap 2x4 spacers, 1 foot long
- 4 scrap 2x2s for positioning the caps
- 6 pressure-treated 2x2s, 8 feet long
- 66 deck screws, 2 inches long
- 20 deck screws, 3 inches long
- 16 deck screws , 4 inches long
- 1 bag of concrete, 40 lbs.
- 1 bag of pea gravel, 25 lbs.
- Exterior stain
- 1½ cubic yards of black dirt



The finished project before installation.

1 Set two 8-foot scrap 2x4s across sawhorses to support your plywood while sawing. Using a circular saw, cut three 8-foot by 16-inch pieces. Set the blade so it extends ¼ inch below the plywood. Wear gloves, eye protection, and a dust mask when cutting pressure-treated lumber.

2 Cut one of the strips to make two 16-inch by 45-inch end pieces for the sides. Trim the two remaining long strips to 93 inches for the front and back of the box.

3 Cut six 3-foot-long 4x4 posts (to cut through the 4x4 with a circular saw, you'll need to cut each post from two opposite sides).

4 Attach 3-foot posts to your end pieces as shown in the illustration. Clamp each post in place so it lines up with the edges of the plywood. Fasten the screws through the plywood and into the 4x4s by first drilling ⅛-inch pilot holes and then installing three 2-inch deck screws to each post.

GOOD TO KNOW
When installing fasteners, work through the thinnest material and into the thickest for the greatest holding power.

5 Attach the front and back pieces of plywood to the sides. Each end of the long front and back pieces should overlap both the post and plywood at the corner. Attach each end with three 2-inch screws. It's easiest to set the box on its back with the post legs up.

6 Add a third 4x4 post at the center of the front and back pieces. Clamp the posts in place and secure them with three 2-inch deck screws.

7 To make the edge cap, you'll want to miter the corners of the cap for a neat appearance. Start by cutting 45-degree angles on the ends of two 8-foot 2x6s, cutting across the flat part of the board. Next, cut the side pieces of the cap from 4-foot pieces of 2x6 and miter the ends.

8 Flip the structure so it stands on its legs. Using a framing square, adjust the corners until the box is squared up.

9 Starting at one corner, install the 2x6 caps, adjusting the mitered ends so the joints are tight and the overlap is even all the way around the box. Fasten the caps into the tops of the posts with 3-inch deck screws. Measure carefully and drill pilot holes to install 3-inch screws through the 2x6 caps and into the edge of the plywood beneath.

NO SWEAT
It's tough to cut a perfect angle, but even the tightest miter joint opens up due to changes in weather.

10 The 2x2 bands around the raised bed help stiffen the plywood while adding a decorative touch. To keep the bands the same distance apart all the way around the box, try using a scrap 2x4 as a spacer. Miter the ends of the 2x2 bands for a neat appearance. Attach the bands by drilling pilot holes and fastening the 2x2s to the posts with 4-inch deck screws.

11 Working from inside the box, mark the locations of the 2x2 bands and secure them with 2-inch deck screws driven through the plywood and into the bands.

12 Choose a nice sunny location for your raised bed where it will get at least six hours of sunlight daily. Strip the sod from a 5-foot-by 9-foot area. Enlist a helper to help you carry the structure to its site. Position it where you want it and dust the base of each post with flour to mark for digging your postholes.

13 Set the box aside and dig six holes about 22 to 24 inches deep using a posthole digger. Pour a couple of inches of pea gravel into the bottom of the holes for drainage. Set the raised bed into the holes and level it, adding more pea gravel if necessary.

14 When the box is level on all four sides, pour dry concrete mix into each hole. No need to add water—it won't take long for the concrete mix to wick moisture and harden.

15 If you want to stain your raised bed, do it before backfilling around it. Once the stain is dry, fork the soil inside the bed and add 1½ cubic yards of black dirt. Mixing in some compost is ideal. You can plant immediately, but note that the soil will settle during the growing season and need topping up for its second year.

Dave Toht is a writer and illustrator living in Minnesota who believes a sun-ripened tomato is one of the finest things in the universe. ■

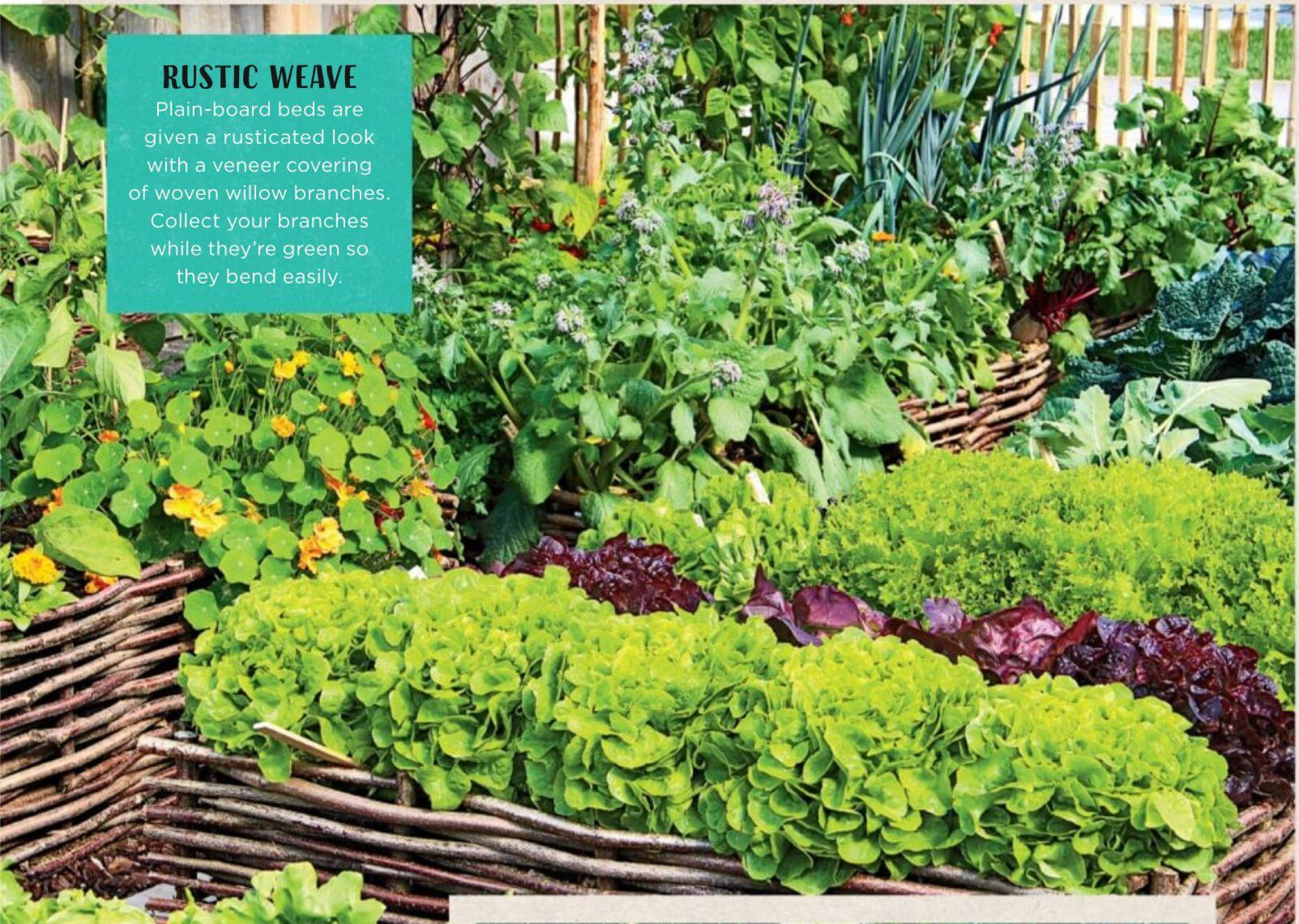
Is Pressure-Treated Lumber Safe?

Many of us raise our own vegetables because we want control over what goes into them. That's cause for concern when it comes to pressure-treated (P-T) lumber. Be assured that in 2003 the USDA banned the really nasty stuff that contained arsenic. Since then, the treatment of choice has been alkaline copper quat (ACQ) or copper azole (CA-B) combined with a fungicide. Although neither is acceptable for growing certified organic produce, for homegrown purposes P-T lumber is reckoned a safe choice. Still concerned? To avoid P-T altogether, choose rot-resistant cedar (or cypress if it's available in your area) and exterior-grade plywood as alternatives.

Space multiple raised beds far enough apart that you can easily reach into them from all sides.

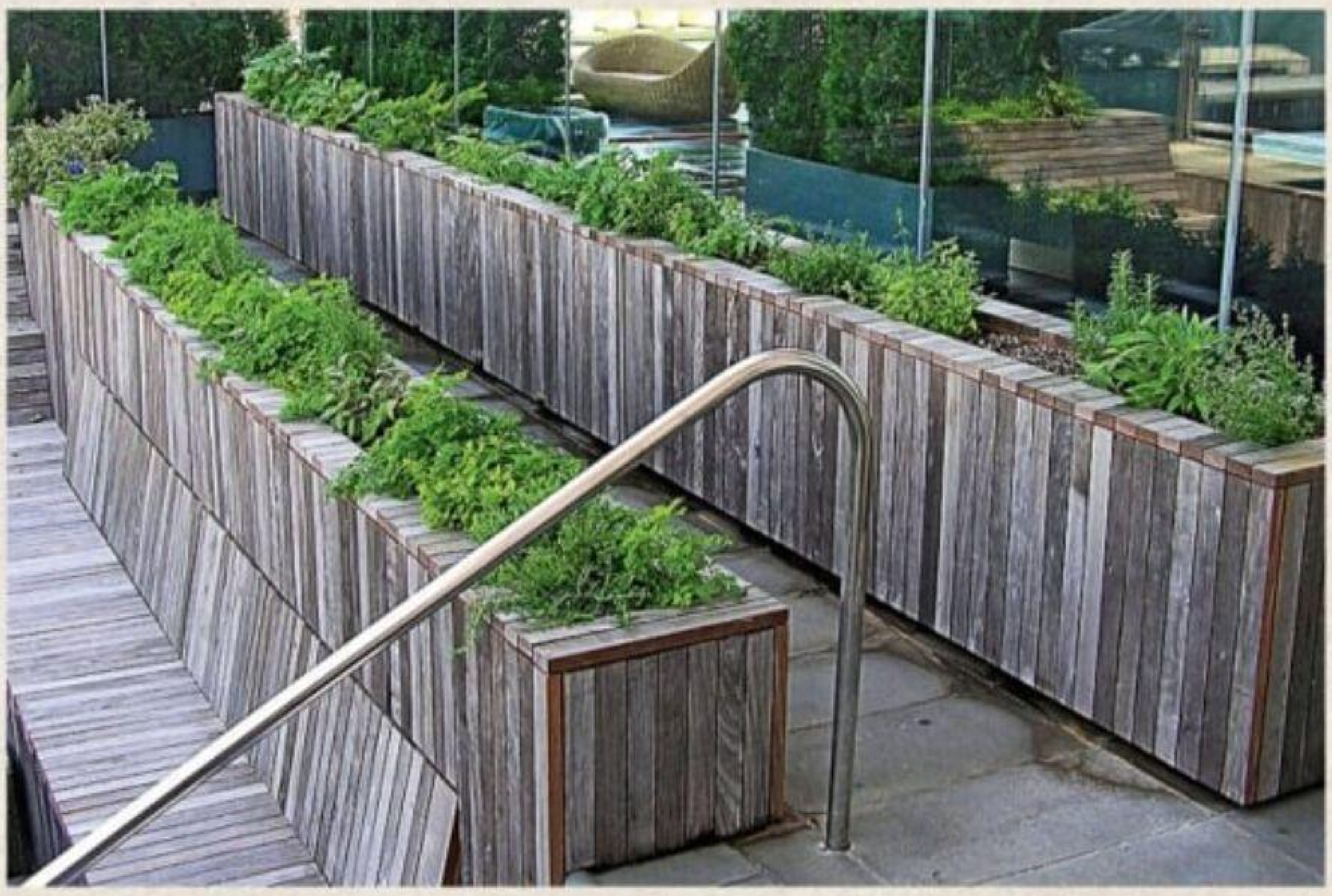
Raised-Bed Beauties

For aficionados of artful gardening, beauty is more than soil deep.



RUSTIC WEAVE

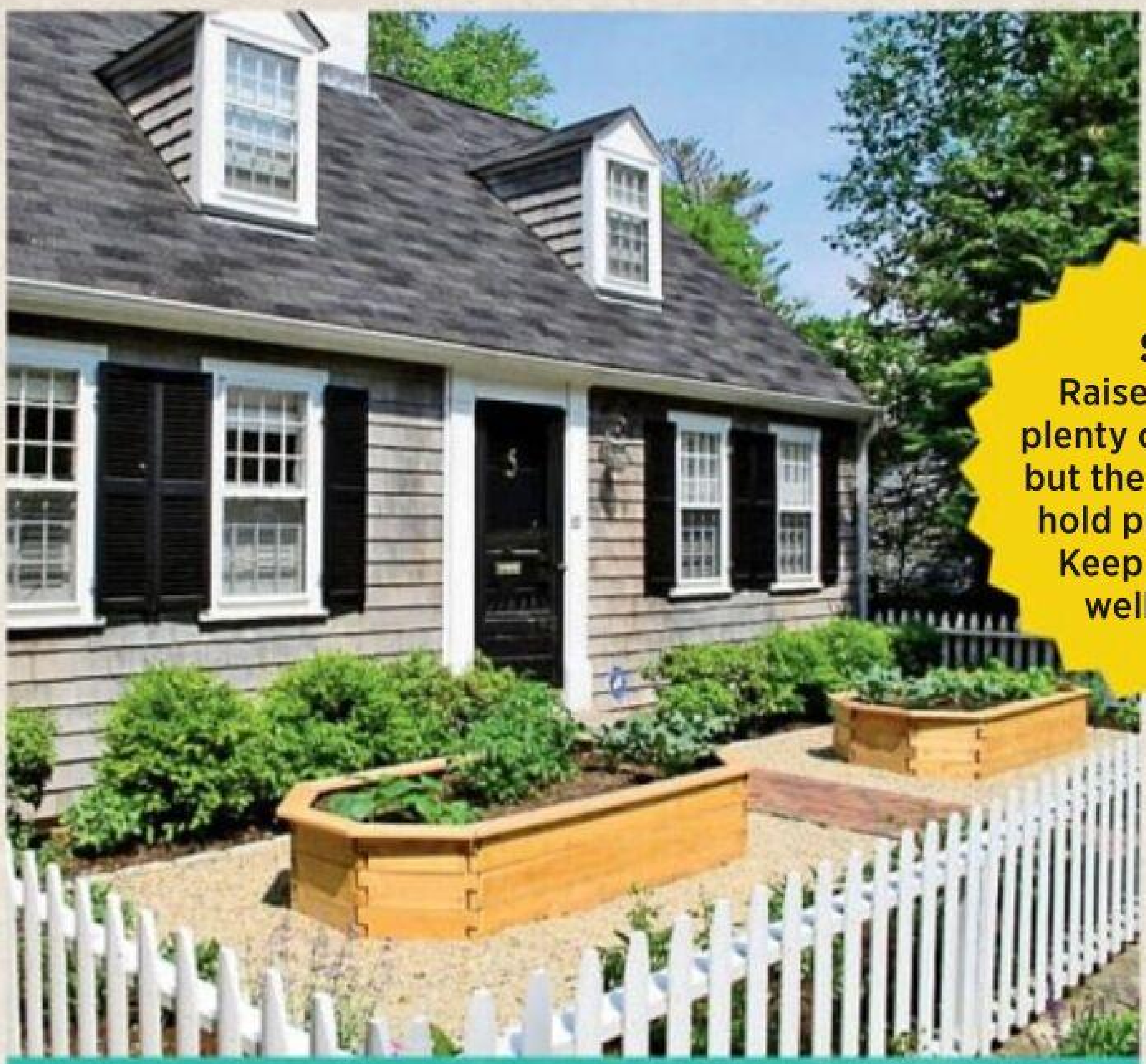
Plain-board beds are given a rusticated look with a veneer covering of woven willow branches. Collect your branches while they're green so they bend easily.



CITY LIFE

Live in a compact cityscape? No problem—narrow beds are great for growing herbs and dwarf versions of your faves, like tomatoes. These beds drain onto the weatherproof roofing.

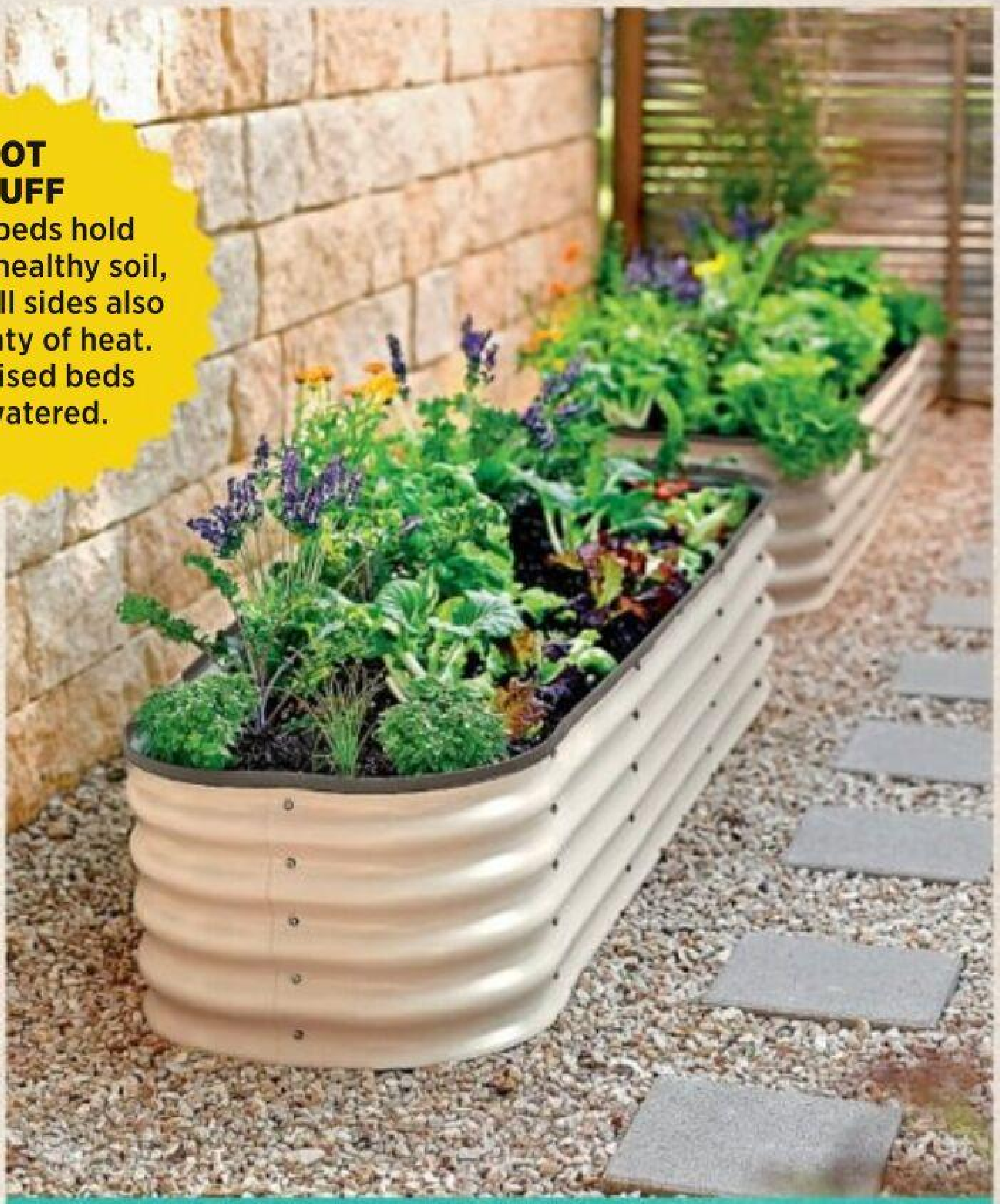
futuregreenstudio.com



HANDCRAFTED

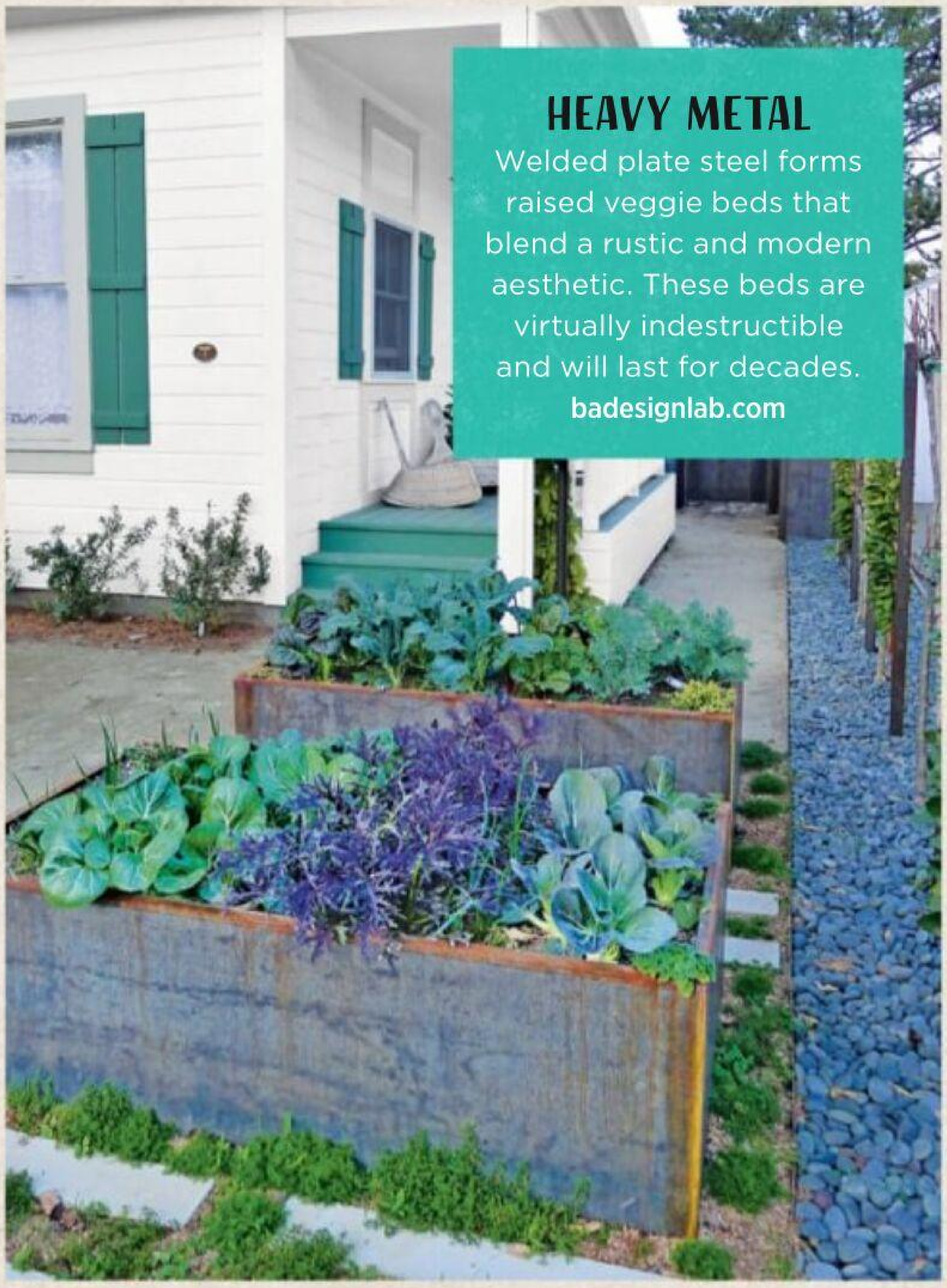
No square corners here. Interlocking board ends create an eye-pleasing, handcrafted look that fits with the overall tidy appearance of this Cape Cod–style house and charming picket fence. **nilsenlandscape.com**

HOT STUFF
Raised beds hold plenty of healthy soil, but the tall sides also hold plenty of heat. Keep raised beds well-watered.



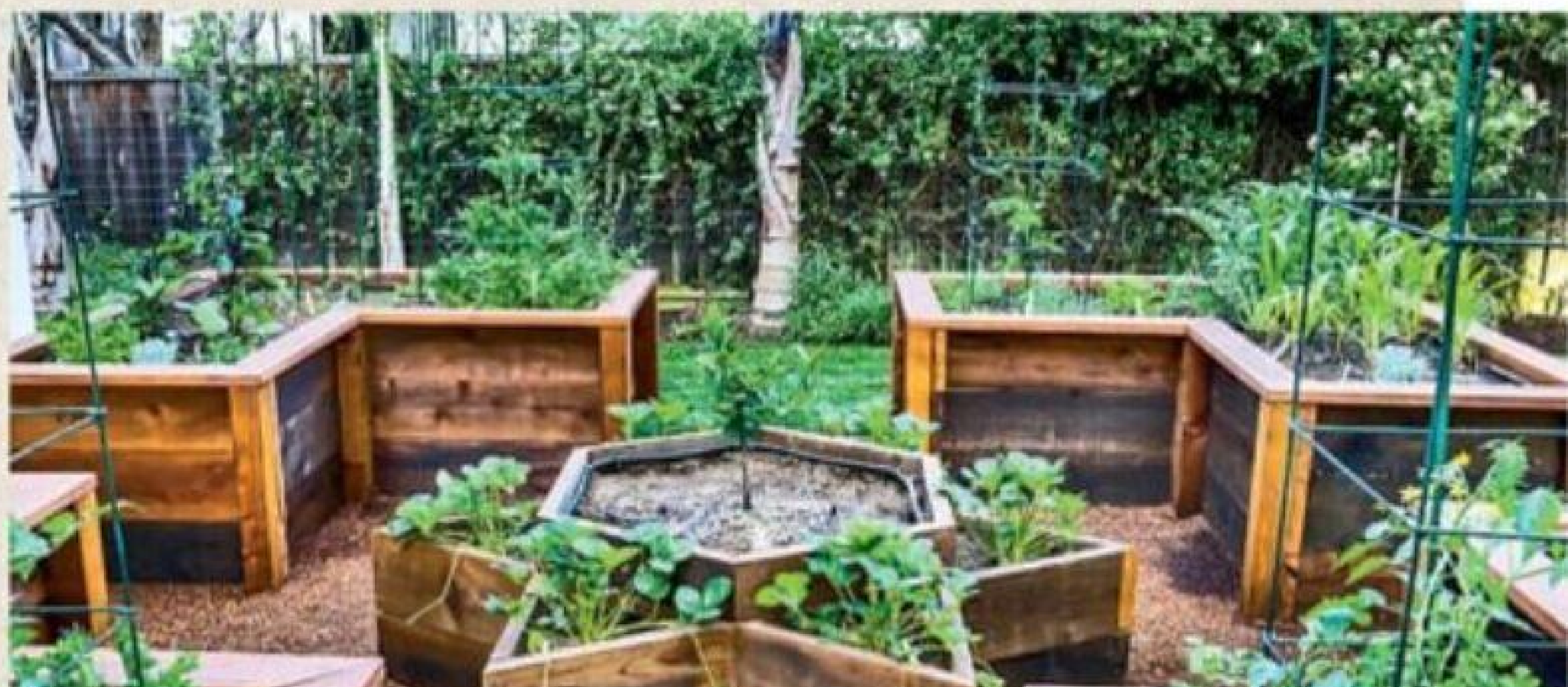
GALVANIZED TROUGHS

Large metal feed troughs make great instant raised beds but can look awkward if not well-sited. These troughs were carefully positioned on a clean, mulched area and blend nicely with the overall aesthetic appeal of the yard and patio. **gardeners.com**



HEAVY METAL

Welded plate steel forms raised veggie beds that blend a rustic and modern aesthetic. These beds are virtually indestructible and will last for decades. **badesignlab.com**



GARDEN STAR

Give your garden star power with a raised bed that's out of this world. The "rays" of this star-shaped redwood bed make it easy to tend and then harvest plants. **casasmithdesigns.com** ■

Rather than forage on their own, many deer prefer for you to grow tasty edibles for them in your garden.

GARDEN PROJECTS

Pest-Proofing Your Garden

All types of critters love to eat your edibles. Here are clever ways to prevent them from munching your tasty crops. BY DAVE TOHT

YOU TILLED YOUR garden, easing in a healthy dose of mature compost. With any danger of frost gone, you planted. Then one morning you go outside to find your vegetables nipped in their prime. Deer, rabbits, birds and other pests have struck. So unfair!

Every garden falls victim to pests of one type or another. But how to handle the problem humanely? And how about earth-friendly solutions to plant-killing insects?

Here is a lineup of common pests and some proven options for fending them off.

Deer fencing

OH, DEER

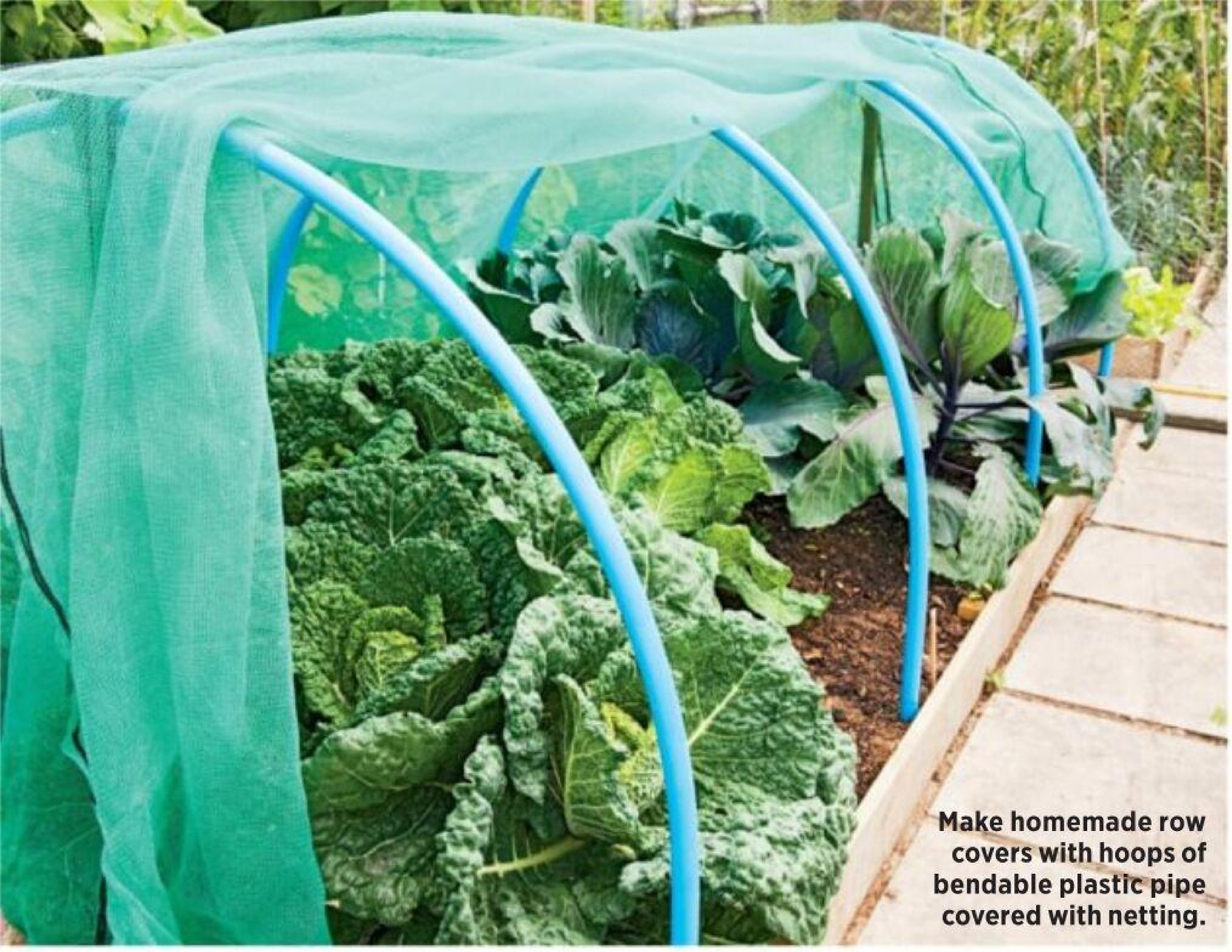
To protect your produce, try a few low-tech defenses. For example, deer don't like strong smells, such as garlic, rotten eggs, commercial deer repellents (that smell like rotten eggs) or scented hand soaps.

A deer's radarlike ears are sensitive to unexpected noises. Wind chimes or a couple of suspended pie tins can rattle them. Some gardeners even set up hi-fi speakers in their gardens—deer find talk radio particularly unsettling.

But deer are adaptable. They figure out our little tricks. Eventually, the only thing that will keep them out is a barrier. It can take a variety of forms:

- **Netting & PVC** Netting stretched across bent PVC is just enough to protect plants. Deer dislike the idea of getting tangled in the netting and don't try to chew through it—they move on.

- **Fencing** To protect a large area, turn to fencing. To keep deer from jumping over, a fence has to be at least 8 feet tall. Many municipalities have restrictions on fences installed at the perimeter of a property, but they also make some allowances. Check with your local planning department. ›



Make homemade row covers with hoops of bendable plastic pipe covered with netting.

THE BIRDS

Just as your raspberries ripen, you glance out your window to see what looks like a scene from a Hitchcock movie. Birds have beaten you to the harvest.

Pie tins, shiny ribbons, balloons with predator-like googly eyes, plastic owls and quaint scarecrows all work for a little while, but birds are quick to spot a fake threat. Bird netting is the only long-term solution. Ready-made cages or hoops covered by netting will protect your fruit.

REPELLING RABBITS AND RACCOONS

Plastic netting is a handy way to deter rabbits, although if they are persistent enough, they may try to chew through it. Sprinkle blood meal at the base of the netting to discourage rabbits.

Raccoons are wily, persistent and very fond of sweet corn. The only sure defense is an electric fence designed to repel (but not kill) small animals. Electrified strands of wire placed 6 and 12 inches above the ground will discourage intruders. Find electric pest fencing where garden supplies are sold. Tie plastic flags to the wires as a caution to humans.

SLUGS BE GONE

In certain parts of the country, ornamentals and veggies alike fall prey to the slow nocturnal attack of slugs. One solution is the beer trap. Partially bury a plant pot saucer, add some beer and let it work overnight. In the morning, you'll hopefully find slugs that have met a boozy demise.

To deter slugs, shift your watering from evening to early morning to reduce the moisture they love. Surround your garden with coarse gravel, crushed lava rock or ground nutshells–anything that is rough enough to be unpleasant to slip-slide over.

KEEP COOL
Animal pests are hungry and you happen to grow what they love. Don't be discouraged—a few losses are inevitable!

TRY FLOWER POWER

Insect pests can be attacked by a wide arsenal of off-the-shelf sprays and powders. Home-brew recipes include ingredients like dishwashing soap, alcohol, eucalyptus and cayenne pepper.

If you're not squeamish, pick bugs off with your fingers and kill them (to learn how to identify common insects, see pages 18–19.

Often overlooked are the many flowering plants that can protect your vegetables:

- **Petunias** ward off aphids, squash bugs and beetles.
- **Chrysanthemums** are loaded with natural pyrethrum (synthesized pyrethrum is a widely used insecticide). Pyrethrum attacks the nervous system of insects.
- **Marigolds** are related to chrysanthemums and pack the same pyrethrum punch. They have the added advantage of being compact enough to make a fetching border around your garden.
- **Alliums** include leeks, chives, garlic, shallots and onions. They guard against slugs, maggot-producing flies and certain types of plant mildew.

INSECT VERSUS INSECT

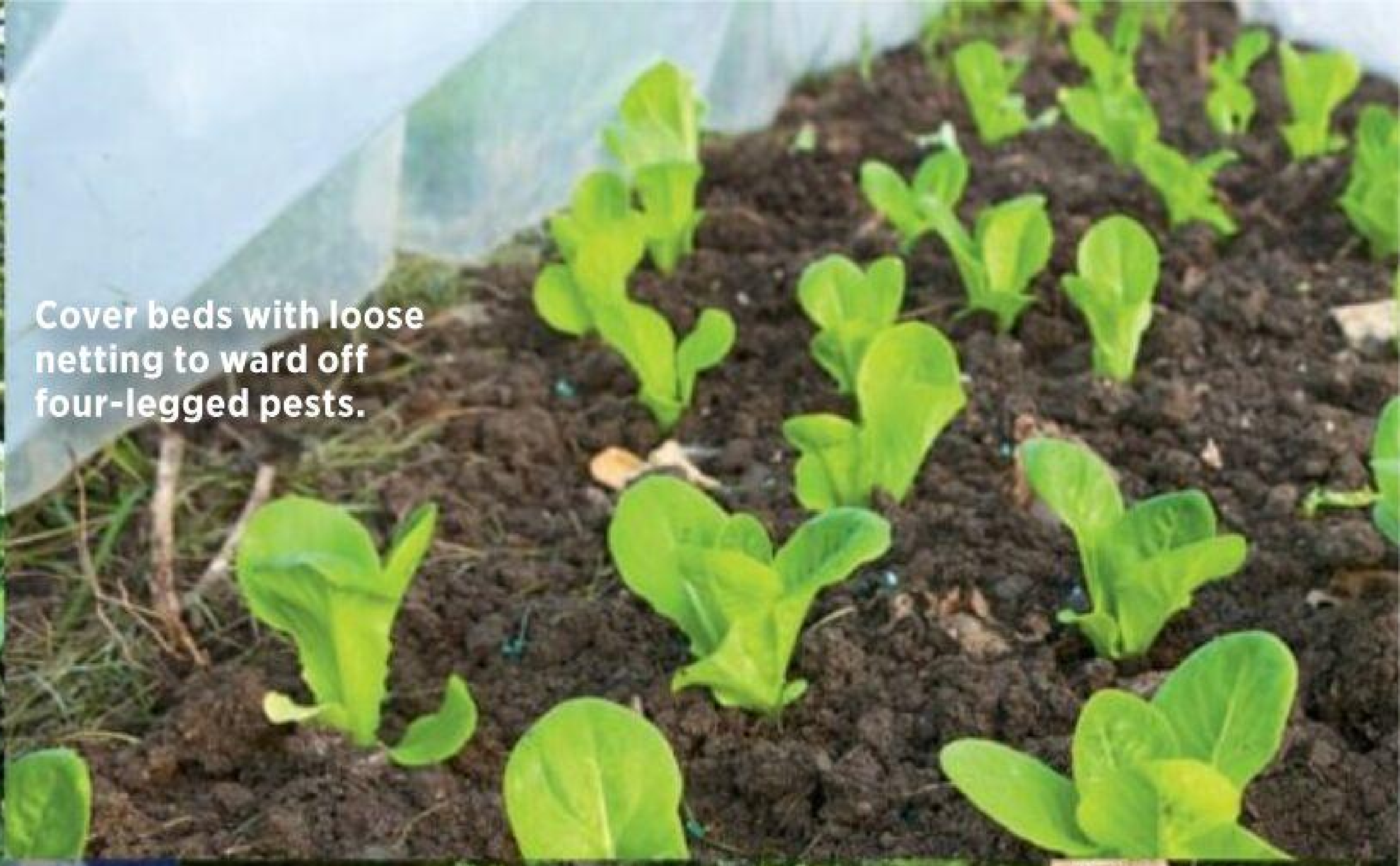
Mobs of tiny, ravenous aphids congregate on all kinds of plants. Chemical insecticides are one solution, but if you prefer a more earth-friendly alternative, import some beneficial insects into your garden. Lady beetles (aka ladybugs), lacewings, damsel bugs and pirate bugs are some of the beneficial insects that eat aphids.

Beneficial insects can be purchased online ($4 will buy you 300 ladybugs) for a quick deterrent.

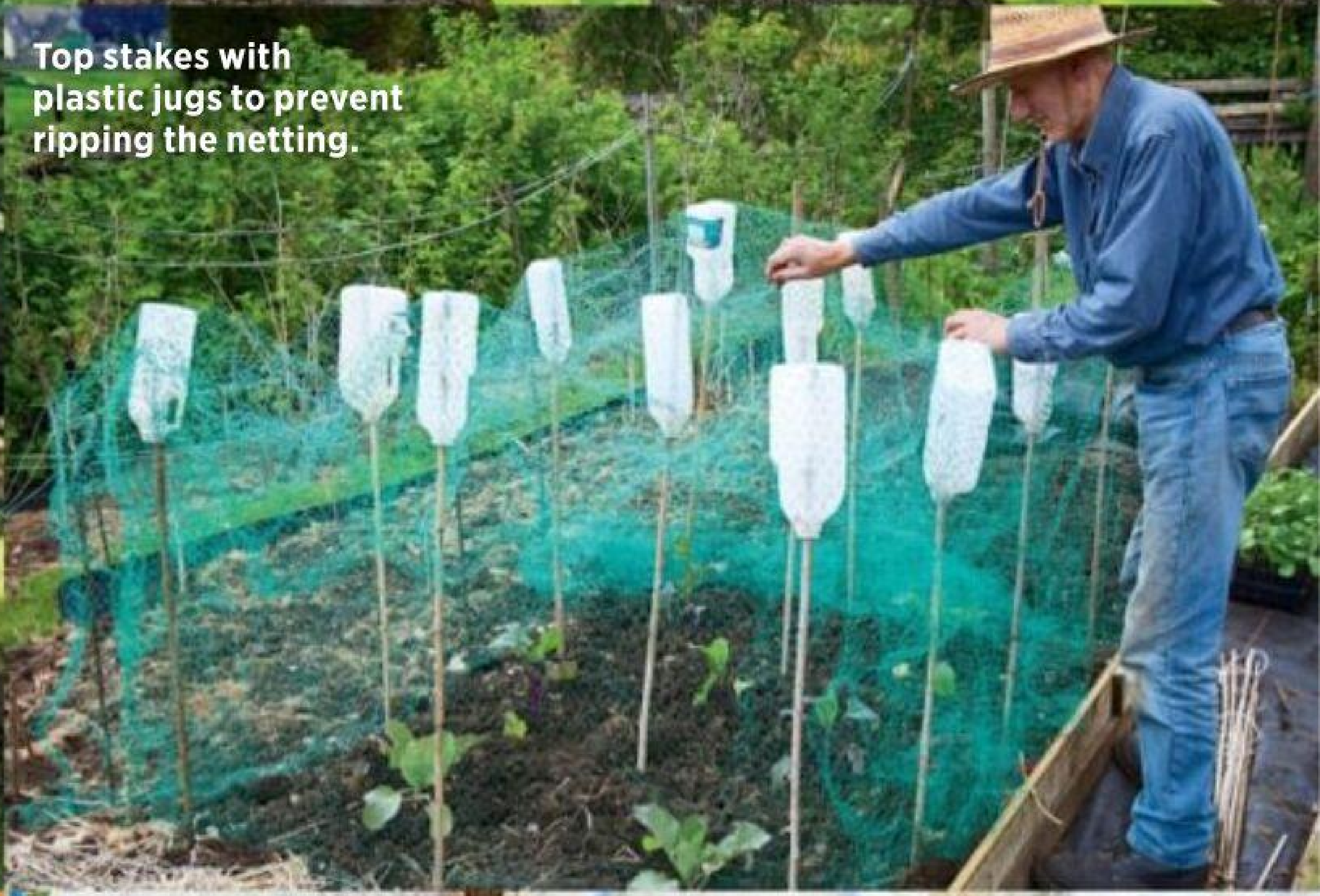
COVER-UPS

Row covers protect crops from birds, beasts and insects throughout the summer and capture heat for an early start in the spring. A row cover is a frame covered with lightweight, breathable fabric. Sizes range from about 1 to 3 feet in diameter. There's plenty of light for young plants, but bugs can't get in. ■

Bird netting is essential for protecting fruit trees, especially cherries, from marauding birds.

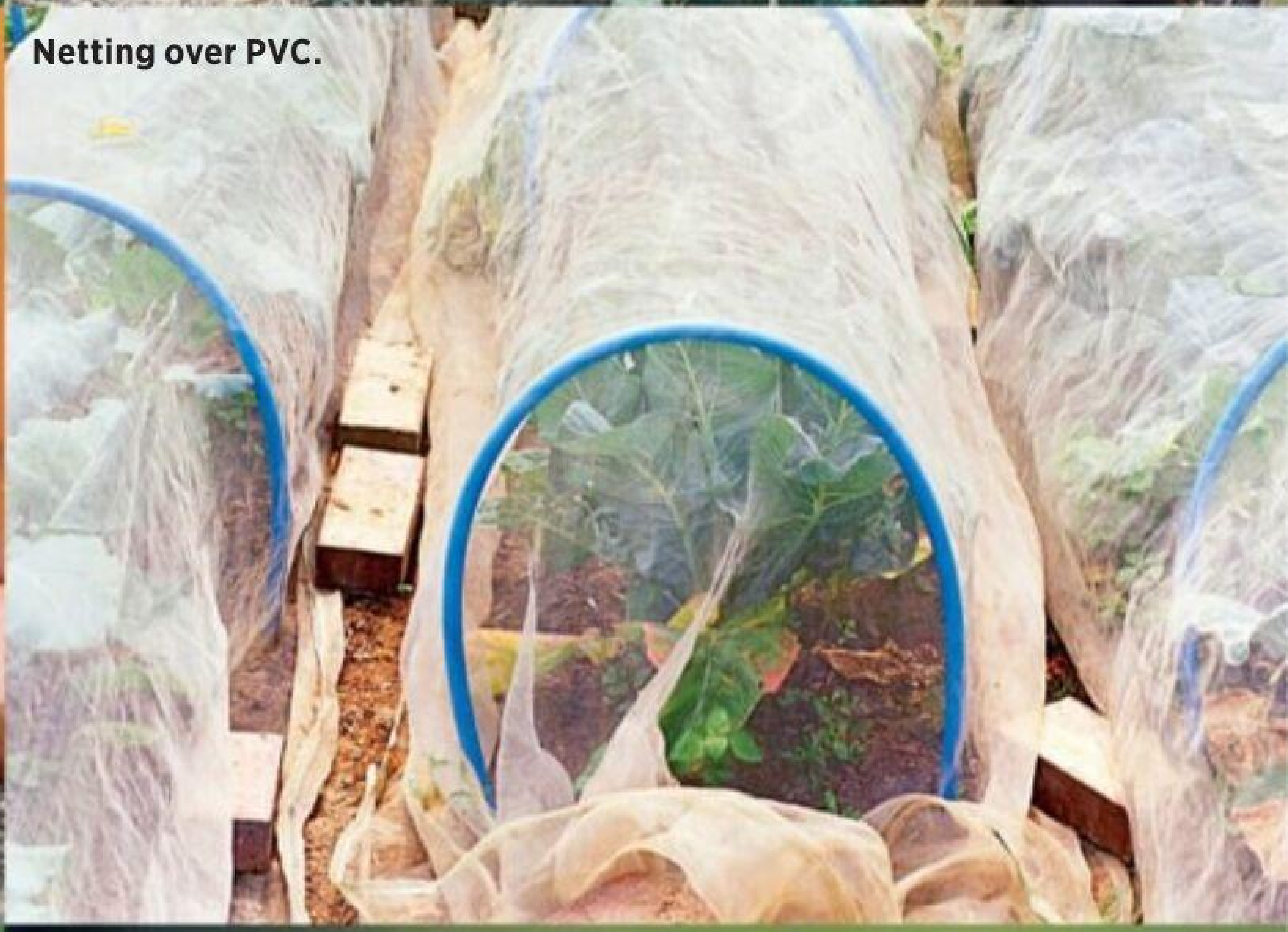


Cover beds with loose netting to ward off four-legged pests.



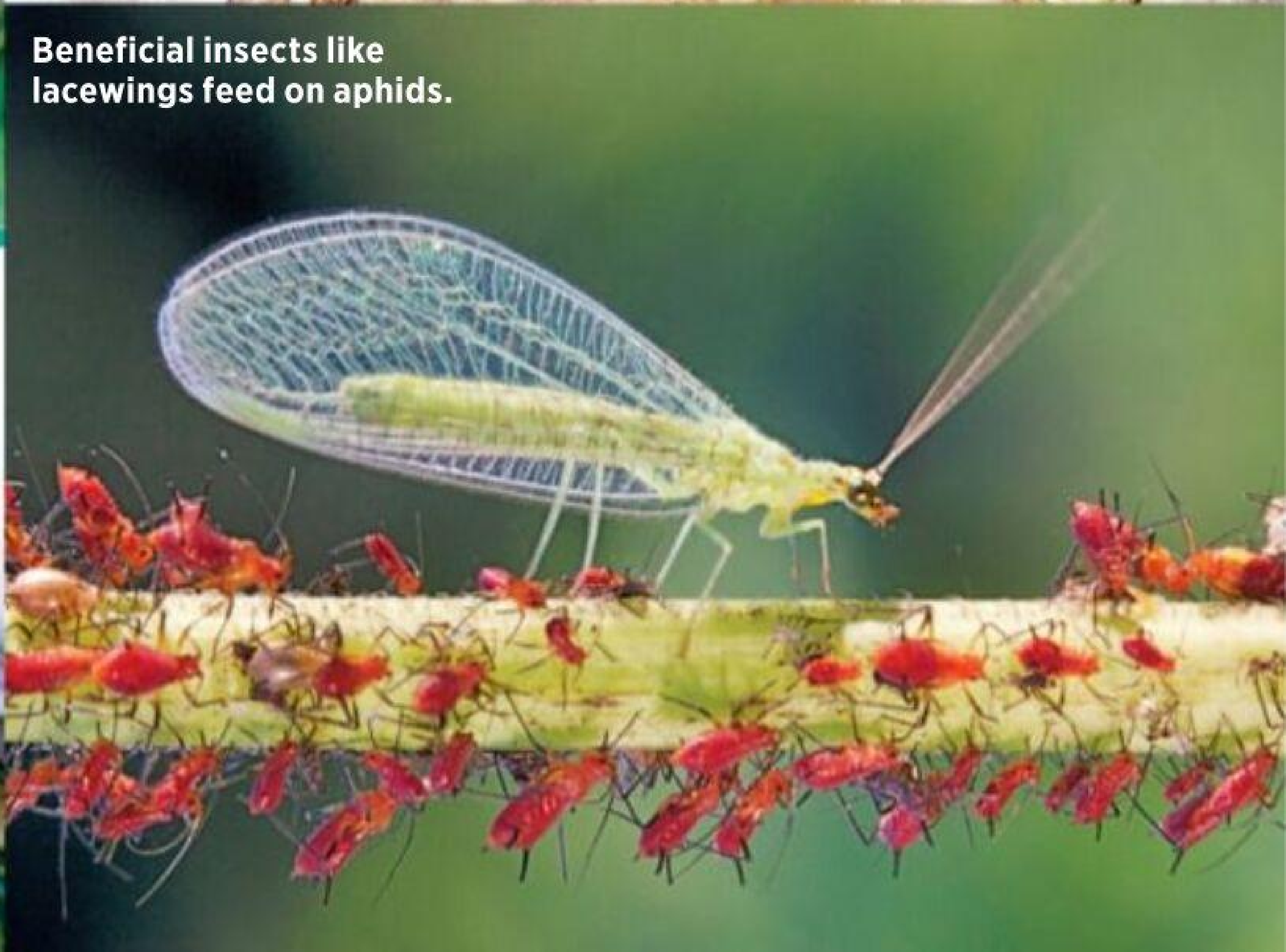
Top stakes with plastic jugs to prevent ripping the netting.

Beer-filled saucers drown slugs.



Netting over PVC.

Aromatic flowers such as alliums and marigolds help deter pests.



Beneficial insects like lacewings feed on aphids.

GARDEN PROJECTS

How to Dry & Store Herbs

Preserving your own stash of flavorful herbs gives you fresh seasonings for year-round cooking and saves you money, too. BY DAVE TOHT

Dehydrating machines have time and temperature controls.

OF ALL THE methods of preserving garden produce, drying herbs is the quickest to master, requiring less of a learning curve than canning, freezing or pickling. It's a great way to capture summer freshness for year-round cooking.

Drying your own herbs makes culinary sense–and economic sense, too. For example, that tiny jar of store-bought basil might actually be costing you more than $90 a pound, but you can grow, dry and store your own herbs for just pennies per pound.

Here's a roundup of the various drying methods and tips on how to store your dried herbs to maximize flavor and longevity.

PREPPING YOUR HERBS

The essential goal of drying is to preserve herbs at the peak of their flavor. To get a good start, harvest in the midmorning before the sun burns off the essential oils. For flowers, snip off the flower buds as soon as they appear. Snip off seed heads just as the heads begin to turn brown.

Rinse your herbs and pat them dry with a clean cotton dish towel or some paper towels. Remove any dead or diseased leaves or buds. Leave any seeds in clusters. Depending on the drying method you choose, you may want to separate the leaves from the stems or tie the stems together, leaves and all.

HERB POWER
Dried herbs have concentrated flavor power that's about three times as potent as just-picked herbs.

HERBAL ZAPPING

For a quick and easy way to dry your herbs, try your microwave. Begin by stripping the leaves from the stems. Place the leaves between two paper towels. Set them in the microwave and zap for a minute on high. Let the leaves rest for 30 seconds and then give them a 30-second microwave burst, again on high. Check for dryness. If the leaves are still moist and pliable, continue a 30-second-on, 30-second-off cycle, periodically checking for dryness, until the leaves are well-dried.

TRADITIONAL AIR-DRYING

By tying together the stems of a bundle of herbs and hanging them upside down, you can give your herbs a traditional air-drying. Herbs dried this way have six to 12 months of shelf life. The trick is to choose a dry, warm area.

Despite the decorative value of herbs drying from the beams in a country kitchen, near the stove is *not* where you want to dry herbs–the air is too moist, and corrupting flavors are too close at hand. To keep insects at bay, wrap each bundle in a recycled mesh produce bag (like the kind potatoes come in), a paper bag or a square of muslin fabric. For seeds, use an old window screen or screening stretched and stapled to a wood frame. Drying time varies from a few hours to a few days depending on the level of heat and humidity. Wait for the herb to crumble nicely between your fingers.

DRY HEAT

If you live in an area of high heat and low humidity (no more than 60 percent humidity is ideal), you can dry herbs out of doors. Place the herbs on drying screens well off the ground. Limit direct sunlight to avoid bleaching them. Be sure to bring the screens indoors at night so the herbs don't wick up moisture. ›

For a boost in capacity, consider making several screens of the same size with a rack to slide them into. Free plans for solar dryers are available online. Some even come with "turbo flues" that boost heat in lower-temperature regions.

DEHYDRATING MACHINES

Equipped with a built-in timer and a temperature control, a dehydrating machine lets you dry with minimal fuss. You simply spread your herbs on the multiple trays, dial up the temperature to 100 degrees, set the timer and let the machine do its work. Because a dehydrator has a fan as well as a heater, the drying process is even—although many gardeners choose to swap around the trays midway in the process to make sure.

Small dehydrators can be had for as little as $35 to $80, but they may have only one drying temperature or no fan or timer. Larger, full-feature dehydrators will cost between $260 and $330.

HERB POWER II
Freshly dried herbs have about double the potency of herbs that have been moldering in your spice rack for years.

THE REFRIGERATOR?

If you've ever found a shriveled-up mushroom at the bottom of the produce drawer, you'll understand a fridge's drying capability. The same process works with herbs. In fact, some gardeners are convinced that refrigerator drying preserves more flavor than air-drying.

To try this method, begin by prepping the herbs as you would normally. Write the name of the herb and the date on a small, clean paper bag. Place 20 to 30 leaves in the bag. Fold the top down and secure it with a paper clip. Put the bag in the fridge and let it dry for two weeks, giving the bag an occasional shake to speed things along. After two weeks, remove the bag from the fridge and leave it at room temperature for another week to allow the herbs to dry completely. Herbs such as chives, rosemary, basil, cilantro, lemongrass, mint and parsley preserve well in the freezer but need two months to dry.

OVEN OVERKILL

You'd think an oven would be a convenient herb dryer. After all, no kitchen is without one, and it comes with nice built-in racks. In reality, it takes a lot of finessing to get an oven to dry herbs properly. The problem is temperature:

An oven is not designed to produce the 100-degree temperature ideal for herb drying—170 degrees is usually its lowest setting.

If you're determined to try, lay cheesecloth on the middle rack, spread out your herbs and prepare to fiddle with the temperature for a couple of hours. You'll need to dial your oven down to its lowest setting. With the guidance of an oven thermometer, turn it off and on to hold it near the right temperature. You may be able to leave the oven on by partially opening the door to hold 100 degrees—a waste of energy in the middle of summer.

HOW TO STORE HERBS

Store whole leaves or buds to retain maximum flavor. Once dry, the seeds can be shaken from the seed heads. Place the dried herbs in a clean glass jar labeled with the name of the herb, the date and, if you know it, the exact variety for future reference. Store your herbs in a cool, dark place. After a week, check the jars for any interior moisture. If you see moisture, give the herbs another shot of drying time. If mold develops, throw the contents out. ■

Best Herbs, Seeds and Flower Buds for Drying or Preserving

Herbs

- bay
- celery
- chervil
- dill
- lemon balm
- marjoram
- oregano
- rosemary
- sage
- summer savory
- tarragon
- thyme

Seeds

- anise
- caraway
- celery
- chervil
- coriander
- cumin
- dill
- fennel
- mustard

For Seasonings, Teas & Sachets

- bee balm
- chamomile
- chive
- dill
- geranium
- lavender
- linden
- marigold
- nasturtium
- rose
- thyme
- yarrow

Dried herbs can be used whole or ground into powders and stored in bottles.

Water-bath immersion is a classic way to preserve fruits and vegetables.

Canning Primer

Saving your surplus is a great way to enjoy your harvest all winter long. BY DAVE TOHT

A GARDEN REALLY hits its stride in midsummer, producing a tasty bounty that, chow down as you might, is hard keep up with. Having grown wonderfully fresh produce–pure and undeniably local–it's time to stash some away for winter. You have several options:

- **Water-bath canners** ($25 for a seven-jar pot) do the job for high-acid foods like fruits and anything pickled.
- **Pressure canners** ($85 for a seven-quart model) provide pressurized heat–an extra preservative punch needed by most veggies.
- **Freezing** is simpler, and although it requires an investment in an appliance–$150 for a five-cubic-foot freezer; $400 for a 14-cubic footer–it delivers the closest thing to off-the-vine freshness.
- **Dehydrating** offers a lightweight, compact product and is especially easy if you invest in a purpose-built dehydrator for $260 to $330.

WATER BATH

Immersion in boiling water will stymie bacteria in high-acid foods such as fruits and fruit juices, as well as preparations like jams, salsas, pickles, relishes and chutneys. You'll need:

- A water-bath canner or a pot large enough to hold several quart canning jars and deep enough so the jars have a couple of inches of space above them.
- Glass canning jars with new lids and bands (the twist-on rings that hold the lids).
- A rack to keep the jars off the bottom of the pot.
- A jar lifter for safely hefting hot jars.
- A funnel for filling jars.

Run your jars through the dishwasher or wash them with soap and hot water before fully immersing them in a pot of simmering water–the jars must be hot when filled to avoid cracking.

Place a rack in your canning pot, fill the pot halfway and bring it to ›

YOUR ELEVATION MATTERS

In Chicago, water boils at 212 degrees. In mile-high Denver, it boils at 201 degrees—less bacteria-killing heat. To purify food at higher elevations, you'll need to increase the processing time. For the same reason, you'll need to boost the pressure when pressure canning—refer to your pressure canner's manual.

ADDED BOILING TIME PER ELEVATION (IN FEET)

Elevation above sea level	Add this much boiling time
1,000 to 2,999	+ 5 minutes
3,000 to 5,999	+ 10 minutes
6,000 to 7,999	+ 15 minutes
8,000 to 10,000	+ 20 minutes

Sterilizing jars

Dehydrator

Pressure canning

a simmer with the lid on. Time events so your food, if cooked, is piping hot when it goes into the canning jars. Fill the jars so there's "headspace" between the food and the jar top–a quarter-inch headspace for jams and fruit juices; a half inch for sliced fruit, pickles, salsa and sauces. Remove any air pockets with a spatula.

Wipe off residue from the jar lip. Put on a lid and secure it with a band, screwing the band on until it's finger-tight. Don't overtighten the band. As the jar cools, a vacuum forms inside it, creating an airtight seal. Use the jar lifter to place the jar in the canning pot. Once all your jars are in, add hot water until the jars are covered by at least an inch of water. Cover and simmer for as long as the recipe requires. When done, remove the hot jars with a jar lifter and set them on a cloth to cool for 12 to 24 hours. Do a lid check (opposite), and store the jars in a cool, dark spot.

PRESSURE CANNING

Most vegetables need pressure and heat to kill off bacteria. Favorite pressure canning candidates include green beans, beets, pumpkin, asparagus, peppers and greens like spinach, Swiss chard and beet greens. Despite their built-in safeguards, pressure canners develop extreme pressure and are worthy of respect. Always closely follow the instructions that come with your pressure canner. Here's an overview of the process:

- Thoroughly wash your jars and the pressure canner. Use a pipe cleaner to clear the vent port. Set the rack in the pressure canner, fill it halfway with water and bring it to a boil.
- Prep your veggies and fill the jars leaving a half inch of headspace. Keep each jar upright as you load

it–food sloshed on the lid can ruin the seal. Lock the lid of the canner. With the weight (aka pressure regulator) off the vent port, turn up the heat until steam flows from the port. Let the steam exhaust for 10 minutes before placing the weight on the vent. After three to five minutes, the canner should be pressurized.

- Start timing when the pressure dial shows the recommended pressure or when the weighted gauge begins to jiggle or rock. Adjust the burner to maintain steady pressure. If the pressure drops below the recommended amount, bring the canner back up to pressure and reset the timer for the full amount of time.
- When the time is up, turn off the heat and let the canner depressurize. Don't rush it: Pouring on cold water can crack the jars or ruin the lid seals. Once the canner gauge shows it's depressurized, remove the weight from the vent port. Wait 10 minutes, carefully unlock the lid and lift it away from you to avoid possible scalding. Use a jar lifter to remove the still-hot jars and place them on a towel. Let them sit undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours before storing.

FREEZING

Most any fruit or vegetable can be frozen and hold much of its original flavor and texture. The only exceptions are fruits or vegetables that are pulpy or have high water content. Freezing involves cooking the produce briefly (a process called blanching) to halt enzyme action that can cause loss of flavor, texture and color.

Prep your produce and wash it in cold water. Blanch it by immersing your food in boiling water–a gallon per pound of produce. Blanching times vary by food item–greens need only a couple of minutes; corn on the cob needs nine minutes. After blanching, plunge the food into ice water to halt the cooking. Seal the produce in a heavy plastic bag, squeezing out excess air to avoid freezer burn and load it in your freezer. Use a plastic container for liquids.

SOUP SAFETY

Homemade soup can be preserved using a pressure canner— it reaches temps high enough to kill bacteria.

DEHYDRATING

Potatoes, tomatoes, onions, peppers, mushrooms, zucchini, green beans, herbs and even cucumbers are among the vegetables that dehydrate well. Ideal for preserving your harvest, dehydrating offers produce that is compact to store, flavorful and a boon to backpackers who value traveling light. You can dehydrate food by air- or sun-drying, or using your oven or refrigerator, but a good dehydrating machine is the most convenient way to dry food.

Prep by washing and uniformly cutting your produce. Most vegetables dehydrate best at 125 degrees F. Time varies by moisture content–tomatoes may take nine hours; mushrooms can dehydrate in only three. ■

How to Do a Lid Check

As each jar and its contents cool, a vacuum forms that seals the lid to the jar. To test the seal, press down on the middle of the lid with your thumb. It shouldn't pop up when you release. Next, tap the lid with a spoon. It should ring, not thud. Finally, hold up the jar and look for the lid—it should be curved down in the center. If a jar fails one of these tests, that means the contents should be discarded.

QUICK & EASY

PERFECTLY PICANTÉ PICKLED BEANS

This delicious side dish turns your summer bounty of beans into a year-round treat. What you'll need for six quarts:

- **About 2½ pounds of fresh green beans**
- **2½ cups distilled white vinegar**
- **2 cups water**
- **¼ cup salt**
- **1 sprig fresh dill weed per jar**
- **At least 1 clove garlic, peeled, per jar**
- **½ teaspoon mustard seeds per jar**
- **½ teaspoon red pepper flakes per jar**

1 Harvest your beans at their seasonal freshest. Wash the beans and trim them so they are ½ inch shorter than your canning jar. **2** Make pickling brine by mixing vinegar, water and salt in a saucepan and boiling for a couple of minutes. Add the dill, garlic, mustard seeds and red pepper flakes to the bottom of each jar. **3** Pack green beans upright in the jars, standing on their ends. Ladle in the brine to within ¼ inch of the jar lip.
4 Preserve the beans using the water bath method. Give pickled beans a couple of weeks to come to full flavor.

—Recipe by Rebecca Anderson

GARDEN PROJECTS

Vertical Gardening

Don't have the garden space to spread out? Then try going up. BY DAVE TOHT

IF YOU HAVE limited space for gardening or are hemmed in by trees and shade, you've still got options for growing edibles–just think vertically. Fences, trellises and terraced structures all give vegetables a leg up on capturing sunlight. And it pays off: Depending on the structure chosen, a vertical garden can triple or quadruple the productivity of its footprint.

Vertical gardening has fringe benefits, too. Getting plants off the dirt keeps produce away from ground-hugging pests. Elevated plants also are easier to harvest, and if you grow herbs in a tiered planter, you'll find them so much handier for snipping.

HERE COMES THE SUN

When choosing a spot for a vertical garden, sun orientation is everything. Vertical gardens do best when oriented to face the south or southeast. You'll also need to estimate how much sunlight you can expect. Most garden plants need at least six hours of sunlight to do well. Evaluate potential spots by noting when sunlight begins and ends during the day, checking every couple of hours to include the shade patterns of trees. Or stick a sun calculator ($20 to $30) in the ground to see if you'll get the sunlight you'll need.

USING A FENCE

Cord, netting and wire mesh attached to a fence give climbing and spreading plants something to cling to. Fences also can be a solid place to attach wood or vinyl lattice panels–material that's easy for plants to grab onto.

What material you use depends on the vegetable you plan to grow. For example, pole beans happily climb strings stretched vertically, whereas spreading plants like cucumbers need netting to catch onto. Heavier produce like squashes and eggplants call for lattice panels or wire mesh.

ADDING A TRELLIS

Whether freestanding or fastened to a wall, a trellis provides a decorative framework that plants can use to climb. Choose one that is substantial enough to hold its own under the weight of fully mature produce. Some trellises can be doubly functional, adding shade and privacy to a deck or patio.

You can make a handsome grid trellis yourself with cedar 1x2s crisscrossed and fastened at 4-inch intervals with 1¼-inch exterior screws. Or buy a manufactured trellis made of wood, metal or vinyl. Support a freestanding trellis with wooden or steel posts. When covered with vegetation, a trellis can act like a sail in a stiff breeze and will blow over if not well-anchored. ›

SOIL FIRST
If you're thinking of growing vertically, first make sure the soil under your structure is healthy and full of nutrients (see pages 12–13 for more info).

Trellises and other supports don't have to be fancy—you can make low-cost versions with poles and twine.

Locate your vertical garden where it gets at least six to eight hours of sunlight a day.

For a utilitarian approach with a tried-and-true agricultural heritage, build a trellis with hog fencing. Hog fencing is made of ¼-inch steel rods welded into a 4-inch grid and then hot-dip galvanized. It's a long-lasting, versatile material that will provide a lifetime of service. Hog fencing is usually available as premade panels that range in size from 40x48 inches (about $35) to 40x96 inches (about $60). The panels need steel posts or sturdy stakes to hold them upright.

TERRACED STRUCTURES

Search "vertical gardening" online, and you'll find hundreds of designs for stacking vegetables upward. Made of lengths of gutter, wooden troughs and recycled pallets, they are designed to provide miniature terraces for veggies to grow in. One warning: A gutter or trough only 4 or 5 inches deep doesn't provide much room for roots to grow and requires frequent watering. To build a happier environment for plants, see our tiered planter project, opposite.

UPWARDLY MOBILE CROPS

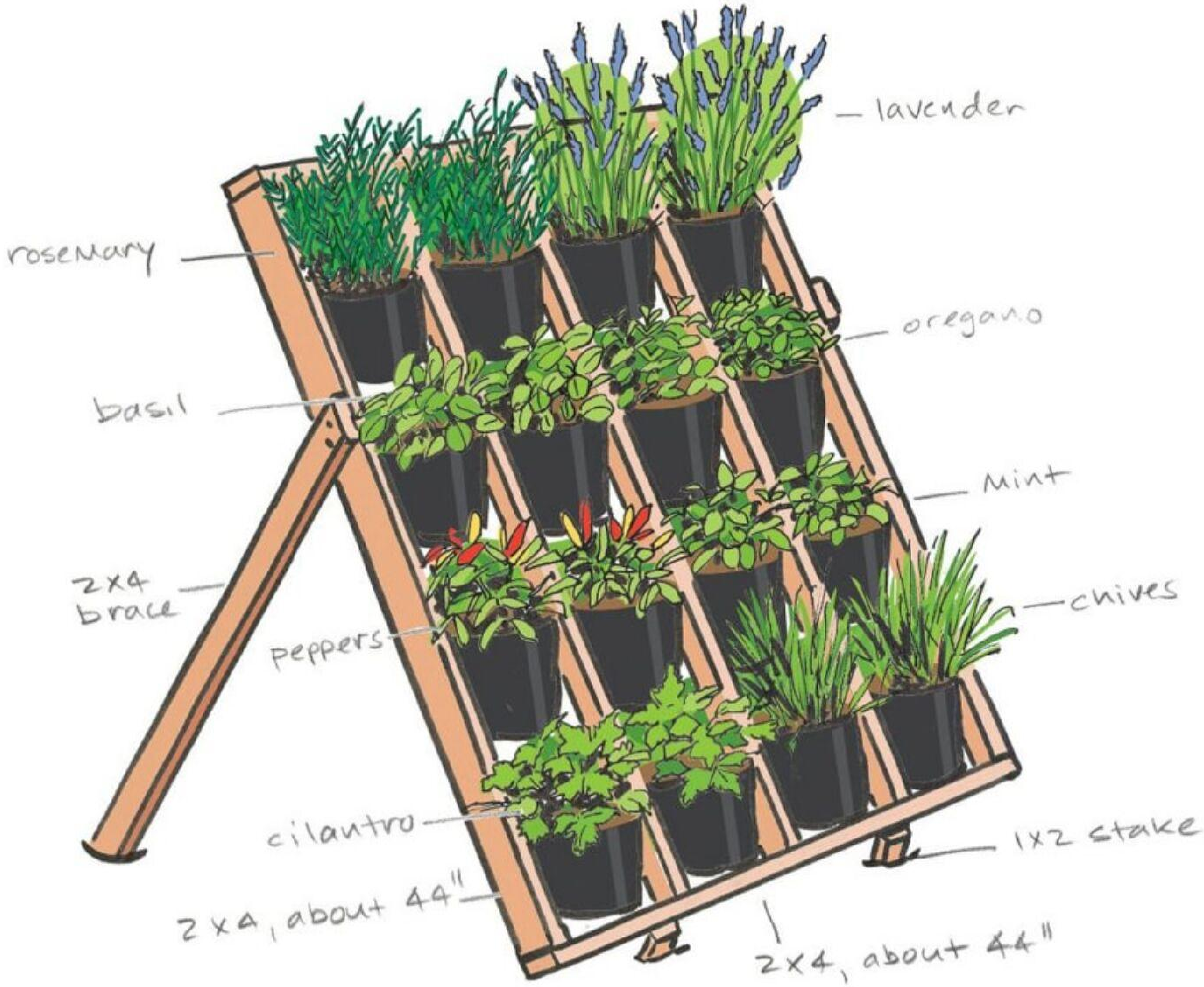
Any plant that has tendrils (those little curlicue tentacles you find growing out of stems) is an ideal candidate for vertical gardening. That's because the tendrils exist to help the plant climb up to catch the sun. Equally suitable are compact plants that happily grow in tiered pots or troughs. Among those that *don't* make sense for vertical gardening are root plants that like deep soil (carrots, for example) and plants such as corn or sunflowers that are tall enough to get themselves plenty of sun.

Climbing or spreading vine crops such as peas, pole beans and squash need only a little encouragement to grab a vertical structure and head upward. Even cucumbers (bush-type pickling varieties are ideal) flourish if given a place to climb. Trailing vines like sweet potatoes, butternut squash and pumpkins can be trained to climb, although you may need to add little veggie "hammocks" or "slings"to support heavy fruits. Train young plants to climb by wrapping their tendrils to a vertical structure–the plants will be grabbing tight within hours.

Most herbs are compact enough to grow on vertical structures, especially chives, basil, oregano, sage, mint, parsley and cilantro. Vertical structures make it easy to harvest greens such as loose-leaf lettuce, spinach and Swiss chard. Quick-growing microgreens–harvested in their tender youth–are labor-intensive. A vertical garden helps by putting micro greens at a convenient height. ■

SLING SUPPORT

To hold up heavy fruits and veggies as they mature on a vertical trellis, make slings from pantyhose.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Tools

- Measuring tape
- Speed square
- Circular saw or handsaw
- Drill/driver and bits
- Ear protection
- Eye protection
- Dust mask

Materials

- (16) 1.7-gallon plastic planter pots
- (7) 8-foot pressure-treated 2x4s
- (32) 1½-inch exterior screws
- (12) 3-inch deck screws
- (2) 1x2-inch stakes

1 Select plastic planting pots—the 1.7-gallon types (9-inch diameter) are ideal. A pair of screws attach each pot to a frame made of 2x4s. That lets the pots swing freely—gravity keeps them upright no matter what the angle of the frame.

2 Lay out the uprights and crosspieces of the 2x4 frame. Our frame is 44 inches at top and bottom, and the sides and interior crosspieces are also 44 inches long. To plan your frame, lay out a grid of pots, leaving 3 inches between pots and ¾ inch between the outer pots and the sides. Measure the height and width of the grid to figure the size of your planter.

3 Cut the top, bottom, sides and partitions of your frame. Assemble the perimeter of the frame using two 3-inch deck screws at each corner. Drill ⅛-inch pilot holes to avoiding splitting. Add the partitions with 3-inch deck screws.

4 Drill ⅛-inch holes opposite each other just under the lip of each pot. Position the pots in the grid; fasten them to the crosspieces and outer frame with 1½-inch screws driven through the holes. Make sure the pots are centered in the framework and can swing freely. Add 2x4 braces to the frame using 3-inch deck screws. Position your vertical garden in a sunny spot and secure it in place with two 1x2 stakes along the bottom edge of the frame. Add soil to the pots and begin planting.

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